

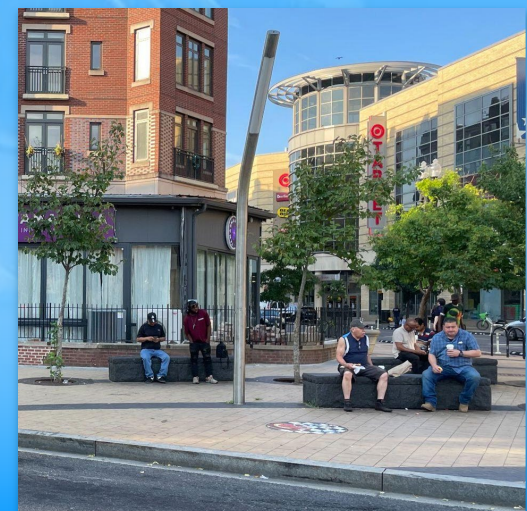
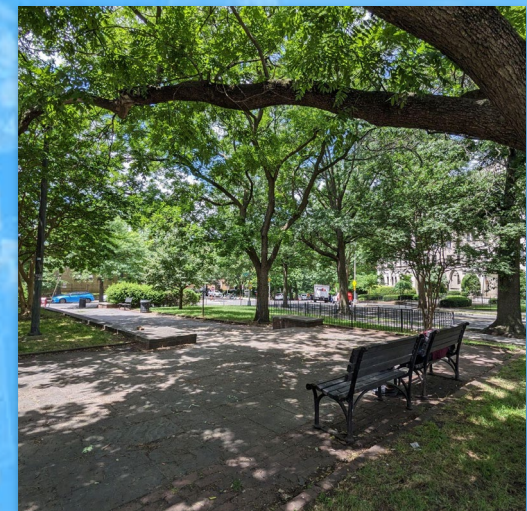
Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant

Vision Framework for Public Realm Design

District of Columbia
Office of Planning



WE ARE
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DC MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR



Acknowledgements

District of Columbia, Muriel Bowser, Mayor

DC Office of Planning (OP)

District Agency Partners

District Department of Transportation (DDOT)

Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection (DLCP)

Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)

Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD)

Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE)

Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs (MOLA)

Mayor's Office of Community Affairs (MOCA)

Advisory Neighborhood Commissions 1A & 1D

Community Partners

District Bridges

Mount Pleasant Village

Beloved Community Incubator

Columbia Heights Education Campus

Consultant Support

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Brick & Story

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Summary

- 1.1 The Future of Columbia Heights & Mount Pleasant
- 1.2 Principles & Strategies

1.1

The Future of Columbia Heights & Mount Pleasant

Welcome to Columbia Heights & Mount Pleasant

Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant are two distinct DC neighborhoods that are home to a vibrant and multicultural mix of residents and businesses. This study aims to improve the quality and accessibility of public spaces in these neighborhoods, reflecting community needs and aspirations while supporting vibrant and inclusive environments.

- **Columbia Heights** is a lively, transit-connected neighborhood with a wide range of shops, restaurants, and community institutions. The area is known for its multicultural character, vibrant street life, and economic opportunities for small businesses. At the same time, the high level vending activity often leaves public spaces crowded, especially at intersections where walking and vending overlap.
- **Mount Pleasant**, a designated historic district, is a walkable neighborhood with Mount Pleasant Street as its main corridor, known for intimate restaurants, streateries, colorful murals, lively markets, and Latino-owned businesses. The neighborhood also has proximity to Rock Creek Park, which is outside of corridor focus, but critical to the neighborhood recreationally. While these assets create a vibrant sense of place, the area’s public spaces and streets would benefit from more consistent repair and maintenance.



Columbia Heights Farmers Market in Civic Plaza



Busy streetlife along 14th Street at DC USA



Highly trafficked corner of 14th & Irving Streets.



Busy streetlife along Mount Pleasant Street



Mount Pleasant Farmers Market in Lamont Plaza



Rabaut Park in Mount Pleasant with shade and seating area

Identifying challenges & opportunities to improve commerce, culture, and comfort

Both neighborhoods are vibrant, but have untapped potential.

Storefront businesses are a critical component of the successful, vibrant public realm.

Vending activity is creating congested public space.

Public spaces are plentiful, but not always comfortable or inviting.

Transit hubs are anchors for public life.

Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant are active and vibrant neighborhoods, both home to beloved, diverse storefronts and businesses.

Local retail storefronts are central to the culture and neighborhood feel of Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant.

Street commerce plays a role in bringing life and gender diversity to public space.

There are ample public spaces in the area, and residents are within walking and biking distance from many everyday needs.

Bus stops and other transit hubs are vital points of public life, naturally attracting vending and other activities while people wait for their ride.



Columbia Heights Civic Plaza



Storefronts in Columbia Heights along 14th St NW



Street vendors along 14th St NW



Triangle Park at 16th St NW & Pine Rd NW



Bus stop at 14 St NW & Monroe St NW

However, the public realm can be improved to invite people to spend more time in public spaces on a day-to-day basis, like in Columbia Heights Civic Plaza and Mount Pleasant’s Lamont Plaza.

Clusters of vacant storefronts in both neighborhoods detract from the overall experience of the public realm.

Vending creates sidewalk congestion, especially along already busy corridors, which detracts from the overall experience of the neighborhood.

Few women and children are observed in public spaces, signaling safety concerns or limited amenities. Connecting streets prioritize cars, with few pedestrian or bike-friendly features.

These locations can be further enhanced to make the experience of waiting for transit more comfortable and enjoyable, turning it into a positive part of the journey.

Areas of focus

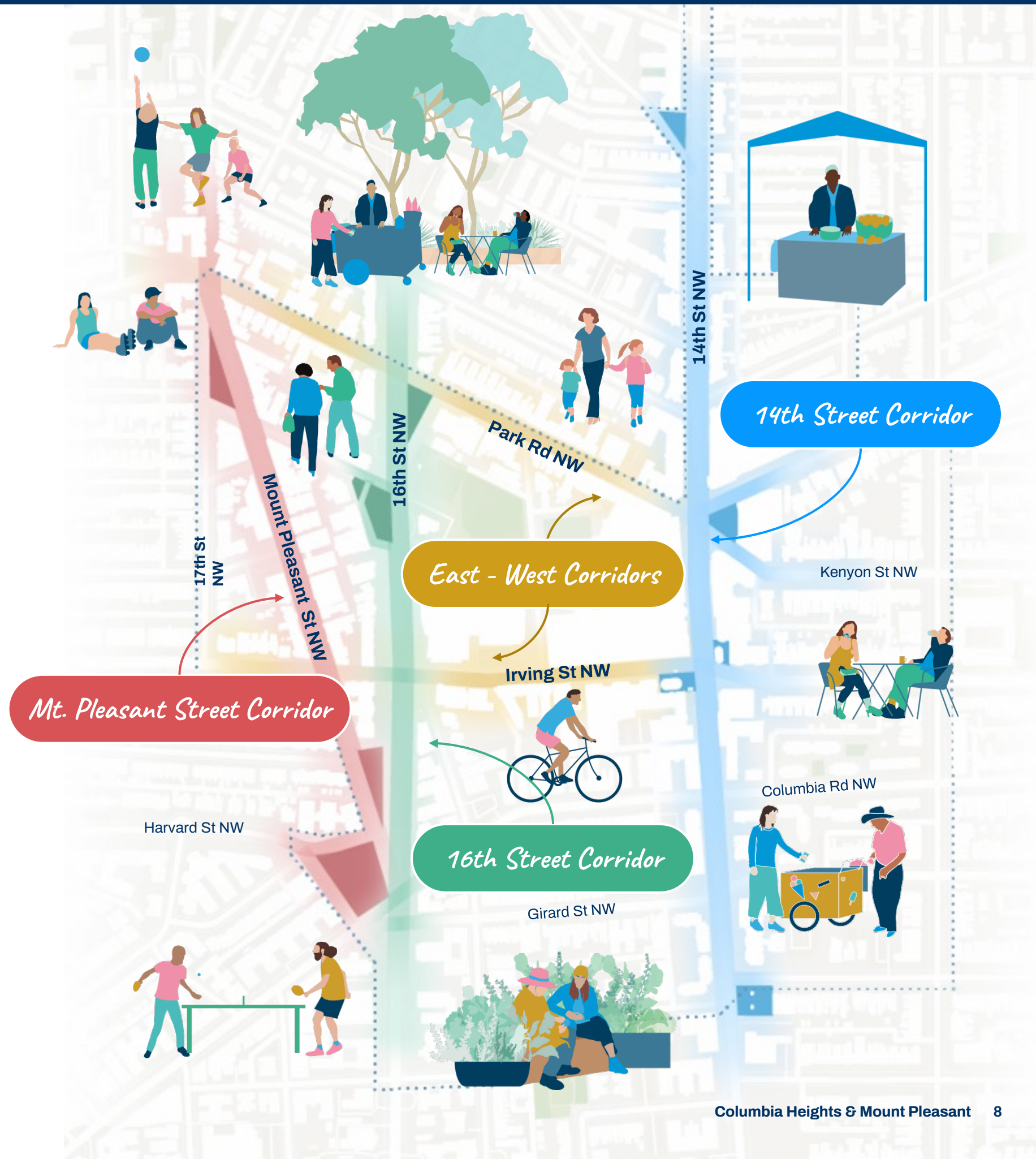
Recognizing that Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant are two distinct neighborhoods that share common needs, this design framework focuses on enhancements to promote a vibrant, coherent public realm experience while maintaining neighborhood identity.

14th Street Corridor: a bustling urban thoroughfare centered on the Columbia Heights Metro and Civic Plaza, activated by commerce and events.

16th Street Corridor: a spine connecting Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant with community anchors.

Mount Pleasant Corridor: a green neighborhood main street with an active street culture and vibrant cultural programming.

East-West Corridors: key mobility links between the Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant neighborhoods.



Implementing the recommendations for Columbia Heights & Mount Pleasant

The studies conducted in Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant identify several key opportunities to enhance the public realm. These include:

- creating safer, more accessible pedestrian pathways;
- developing flexible, vibrant spaces that support local businesses;
- revitalizing parks and plazas to encourage daily use; and
- Integrating environmental features to promote sustainability.

Together, these improvements aim to establish a well-maintained, welcoming, and dynamic public realm that reflects the community’s unique identity and needs.

To implement these recommendations, the following District agencies will play essential roles:

Office of Planning (OP)

OP advises on public space management in coordination with partner agencies, reviews public space permit applications for compliance with regulations and guidelines, and provides guidance to applicants to ensure public realm designs align with planning objectives and community priorities.

District Department of Transportation (DDOT)

DDOT maintains and enhances street and sidewalk infrastructure, including the urban tree canopy, prioritizing safety and access for all modes of travel. DDOT initiates and reviews redesigned streetscapes, upgraded crosswalks, expanded green infrastructure, and activation of public space. Future DDOT-led traffic studies, busway and bike lane projects, and safety enhancements will refer to this design framework in these two neighborhoods.

Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection (DLCP)

DLCP will oversee the regulatory framework for sidewalk vending, ensuring vending zones are well-organized, accessible, and compatible with pedestrian flow. DLCP will strive to balance vibrant vendor activity with safe, orderly public spaces that enrich the area’s character.

Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and Department of General Services (DGS)

DPR and DGS collaborate to design and revitalize parks and plazas. Their focus will be on upgrading amenities, enhancing green spaces, and ensuring these areas remain safe, accessible, and welcoming for community gatherings.

Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE)

DOEE will lead efforts to integrate sustainability measures into public realm improvements. This includes expanding the tree canopy, managing stormwater, and promoting environmentally sustainable designs across public spaces.

Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD)

DSLBD supports small businesses, fostering a vibrant, community-oriented economy. Through resources and training, DSLBD will empower small businesses to adapt and thrive within enhanced public spaces.

Advancing the first moves

The Design Framework in Chapter 4 includes both operational and programming changes that can begin immediately and capital improvements that require significant design and permitting. Here’s how to get started.

Piloting larger projects through temporary and pop-up programming is a helpful tool in understanding and evaluating core strategies and key elements with low up-front investment. Additional engagement with the public can be considered for longer-term implementation planning. Larger-scale or more permanent interventions should be planned for and budgeted so that appropriate, durable materials and other strategies can be thoughtfully implemented for long-term success.

Site	First Moves	Key Stakeholders
14th Street Corridor		
Streetscape	Study options to improve safety for all roadway users and reduce bus travel time between Irving St NW and Kenyon St NW on 14th St NW	DDOT
	Coordinate with ongoing DDOT bus priority project	DDOT
Civic Plaza	Pilot street closures	DLCP, Vending Zone Manager
	Repair splash pad and initiate plaza redesign process	DPR
	Consider enhanced pedestrian crossings	DDOT
Metro Plaza	Pilot vending integration	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), DLCP, Vending Zone Manager
16th Street Corridor		
Streetscape	Pilot enhanced bus stops	WMATA, DDOT, future place management entity
Powell Playground + Library Triangle	Consider pilot to further pedestrianize drop-off loop	DDOT, DC Public Library, private properties
	Consider working with National Park Service to redesign the space	National Park Service (NPS), DPR
	Study options to improve pedestrian crossing safety	DDOT
Mount Pleasant Street Corridor		
Streetscape	Prioritize trash cleanup and introduce more public arts, including wall murals	Private properties/businesses, future place management entity
	Incorporate wall murals in coordination with private owners/businesses	Department of Public Works (DPW) and DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities (CAH)
Lamont Plaza	Implement temporary street closures to coincide with special events and markets	Lamont Farmers Market, future place management entity
	Prioritize repair of paving	DPR
East-West Corridors		
Streetscape	Explore reallocating the parking lane to create wider sidewalks and larger furnishing zones	DDOT

Ideas for action across the study area

The right mix of strategies, partnerships and policy improvements will maximize the impact of catalytic projects.

Collaboration and consideration across multiple areas of expertise will result in a more resilient and successful public realm.

Stewardship and maintenance are key themes across the study area, and will be better served through ongoing agency coordination, additional and ongoing community engagement, and thoughtful consideration, design study, and coordination with other design disciplines.

Agency Coordination

- DDOT for major operational and capital changes to the right-of-way and streetscape
- WMATA for recommendations at Metro Plaza
- DPR and DGS for design recommendations at DC parks
- NPS for design recommendations at NPS parks
- DLCP for vending licensure coordination, compliance, and enforcement, in collaboration with the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD)

Stewardship and Maintenance

- DLCP and its designated vending zone manager to manage the vending zones and organize vendors
- Explore potential to create business improvement district (or similar entities) to take on enhanced stewardship

Community Engagement

- Project-specific engagement for major capital project designs
- Additional engagement with the vendor community and DLCP as changes are implemented

Further Design Study

- Hardscape materials and planting selections for streetscapes
- Detailed design and documentation for major park investments

Utility Coordination

- DDOT and DOEE for utility coordination, including placement of trees in areas where they will be most successful long-term

Green Infrastructure

- DDOT and DOEE for streetscape stormwater infrastructure, including additional planting, bioretention, reduction in impervious area, and shade
- Support tree health with adequate soil volumes and structural planting soils that are suitable for constrained urban conditions

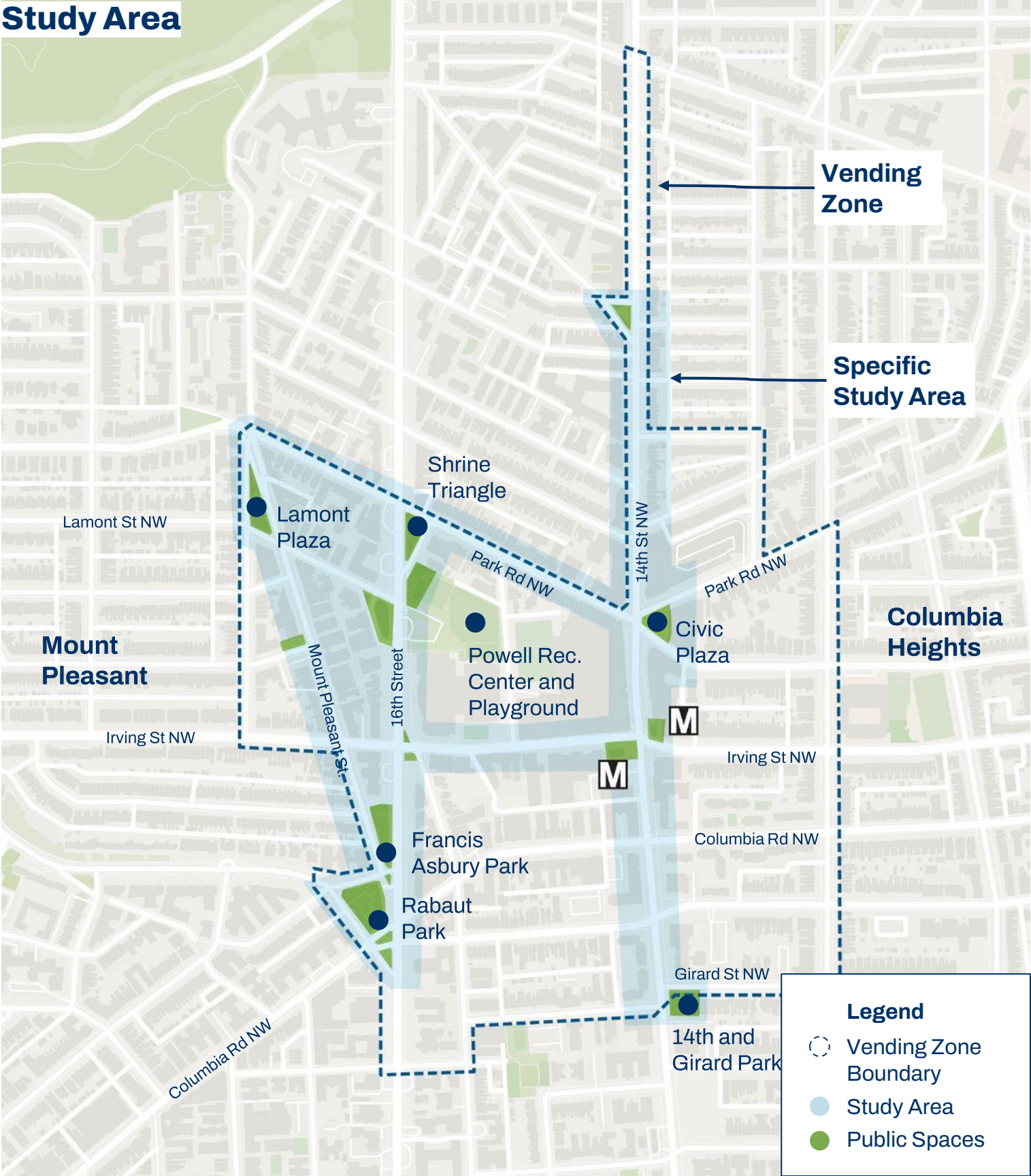
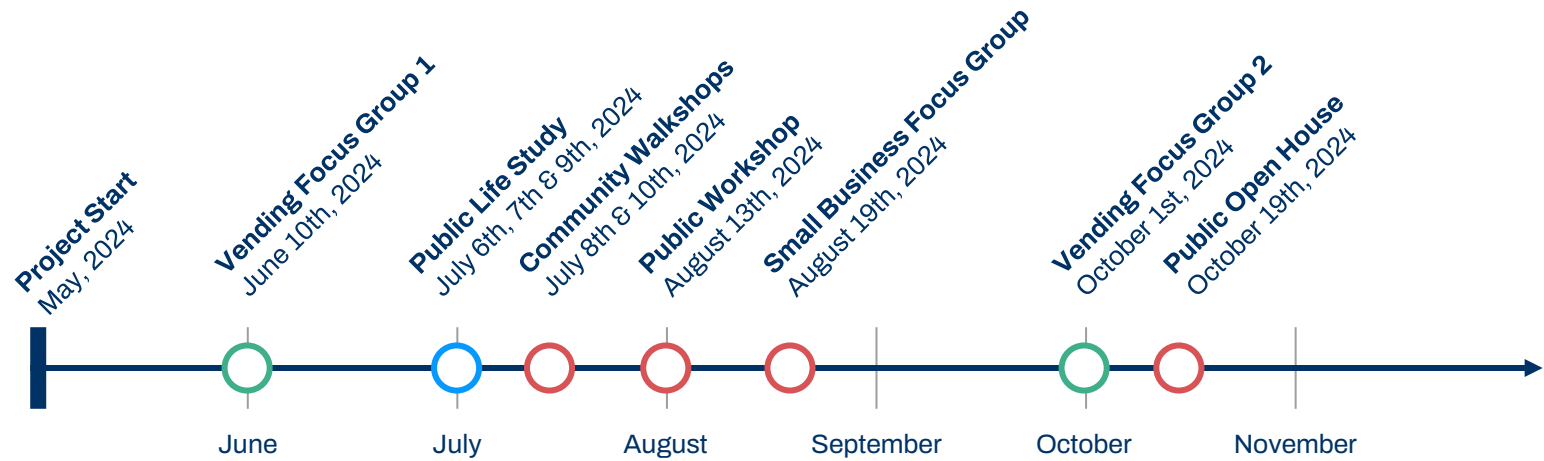
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Principles & Strategies

Designing solutions with community

From May to December 2024, OP undertook a comprehensive study of the area to develop a vision and recommended design framework for Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant. The study included:

- **Inclusive community engagement:** the team led two community “walkshops” (walking workshops) to guide residents through the study area and gather feedback on public realm conditions. The same prompts were also shared on the project website, where 611 respondents provided their input online. The team held two open house events to present initial findings and draft recommendations for public feedback, plus a small business focus group.
- **Sidewalk vending study:** the team held two focus groups with local sidewalk vendors to understand their specific challenges and needs. The team conducted a “shadow day” with volunteer vendors to observe a full “day-in-the-life” of vending operations on 14th Street.
- **Public life and existing conditions analysis:** In July 2024, the team conducted a public life study, which is the observation and analysis of public space and the kinds of human behavior that happens there. The team studied people moving and people staying in six distinct zones of Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant over three days. At the same time, the team conducted analysis of the public realm via multiple site visits, mapping, and referral to past DC planning documents.



↑ Study area map, with blue shaded region showing specific study area and dashed line indicating the overall vending zone

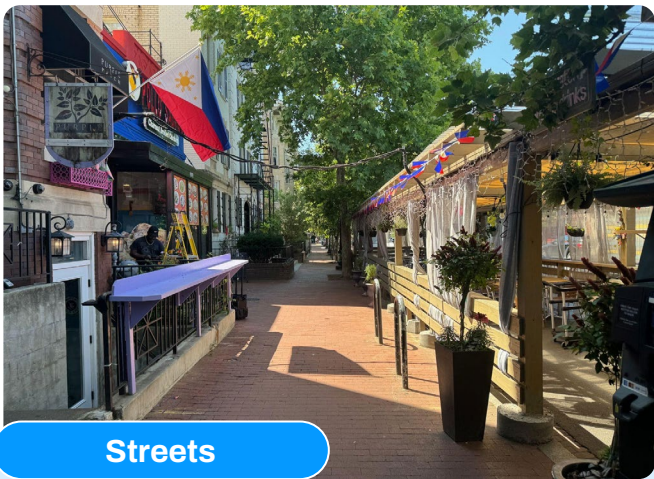
Four aspects of a thriving public realm

These four aspects form the foundation for understanding and improving the public realm in Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant. Each aspect highlights key priorities, and together they guide the principles that will shape actionable strategies for a vibrant, inclusive community.



Culture & Commerce

The public realm is a platform for local culture and commerce. A vibrant and comfortable public realm invites people to linger in a neighborhood and visit storefront businesses. These principles seek to encourage public life, while mitigating the challenges of sharing a limited amount of space.



Streets

Streets play two important roles in DC, both as corridors for multimodal movement and places in which we spend time. These principles prioritize roadway safety and comfort for all users.



Public Space

Both neighborhoods are home to a great variety of parks, plazas, playgrounds, and more, but not every space lives up to its potential. These principles present strategies to upgrade and reconnect these spaces to make more accessible, inviting places to gather and enjoy.



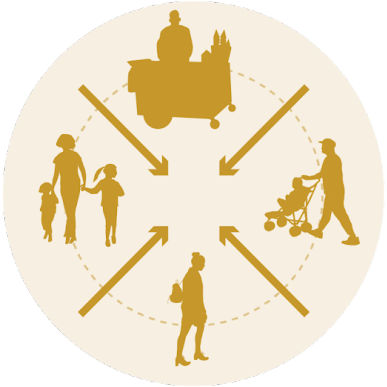
Stewardship

The quality of the public realm depends on proactive management and stewardship. These principles identify a need for enhanced maintenance, provision of social services, and activation to improve experiences in both neighborhoods.

These eight principles shape our vision for the future of streets and public spaces in Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant

Culture & Commerce

Streets



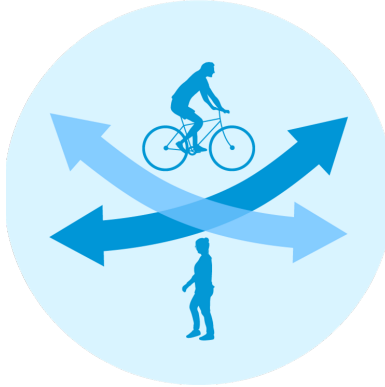
Inviting to all



Activated by local culture



Durable and lasting improvements



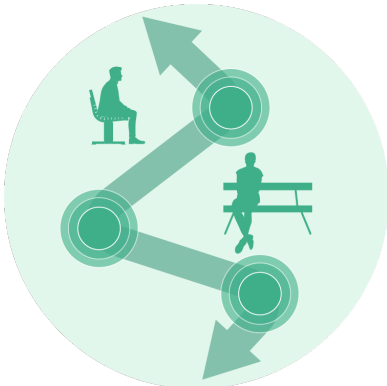
Enhanced walking and biking culture

Public Space

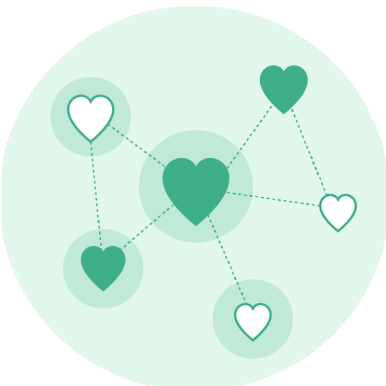
Stewardship



Accessible public realm network



Regular rhythm of comfortable places



Equitable distribution of great spaces



A well-cared for and active public realm



Inviting to all

Enhance the vending experience to make street life safer and more comfortable for everyone

Today, the vending experience can be congested and hectic. This study recommends improving the vending experience to make streets more inviting and accessible for pedestrian activity. Achieving this requires standardizing vendor operations and permitting, creating more space for pedestrians.

Strategies:

- 1 Designate clearly marked vending locations.
- 2 Designate separate spaces for delivery workers in curbside lane.
- 3 Require licensure for vending to help enforce safety, fire and accessibility rules.





Activated by local culture

Foster the culture of commerce by further activating the public realm

Commercial activity drives inclusive public life. For example, we observed street vending increases gender diversity in the public realm by 55%, and farmers markets inspire 14 times more people to spend time in plazas. Supporting local culture and commerce helps invite people into the public realm.

Strategies:

- 1 Provide dedicated spaces for seating and staying around storefront retail businesses and vending, using consistent, branded furnishings.
- 2 Expand on the success of farmers markets by adding new programming that brings in diverse members of the community.





Durable and lasting improvements

Prioritize durability, access, and safety in the public realm

Specialty ground treatments and lighting fixtures can create accessibility challenges. It's better to focus on a consistent standard of quality that can be maintained and let neighborhood culture speak for itself through public life.

Strategies:

- 1 Invest in good quality materials that don't introduce high maintenance burdens.
- 2 Replace and maintain paving throughout the neighborhoods.
- 3 Improve tree canopy throughout the area, especially along east-west connections.
- 4 Increase greenery with movable planters.
- 5 Encourage federal and private partners to upgrade lighting.





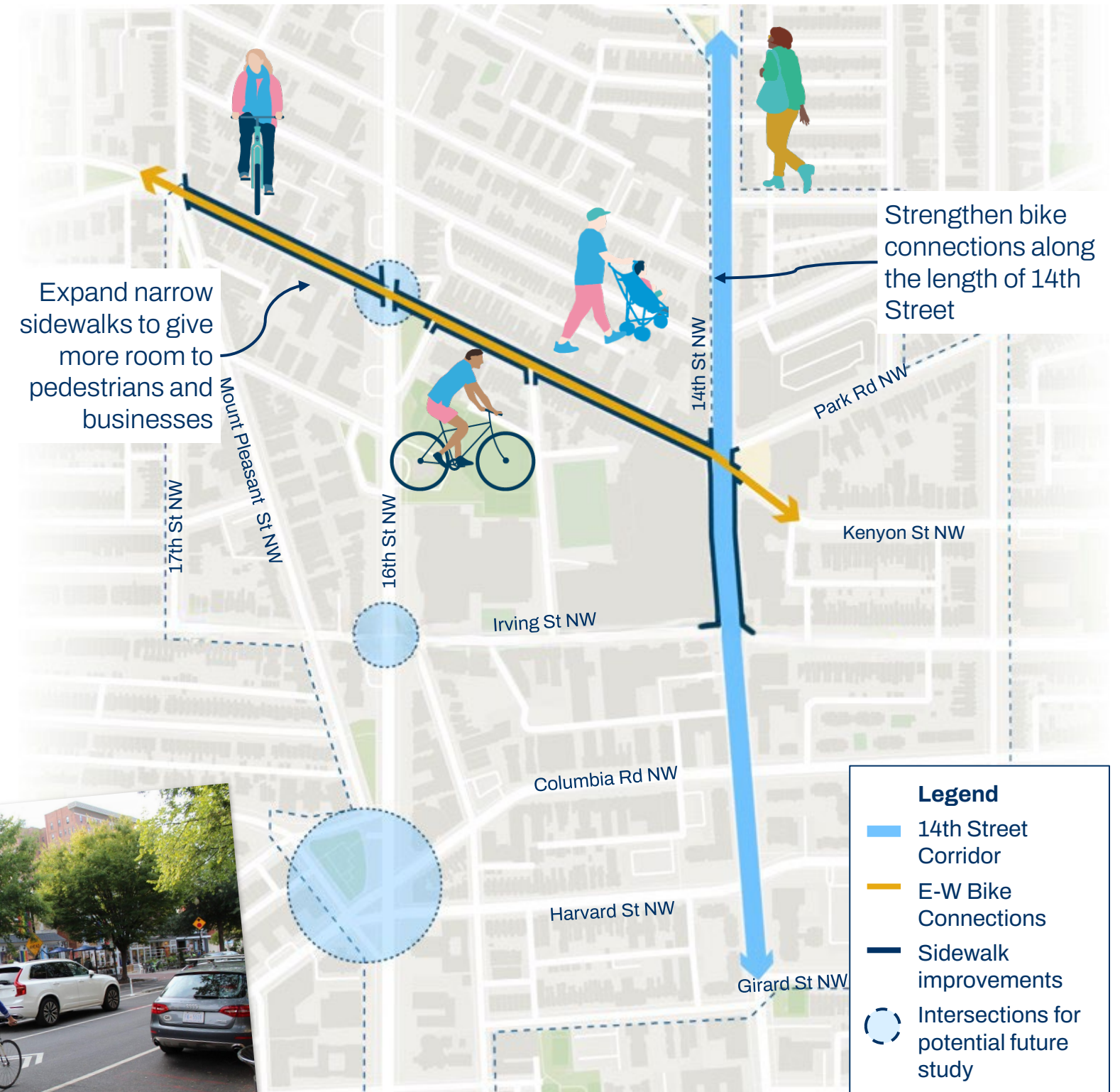
Enhanced walking and biking culture

Promote walking and biking through enhanced sidewalks and bike lanes

Tens of thousands of people move through these neighborhoods daily, yet walking and biking infrastructure is insufficient. Engaged residents especially call for wider sidewalks. Improvements should balance pedestrian and cycling needs with automobile access. Some corridors will continue to accommodate vehicle travel and deliveries, while others can better support safer, more comfortable walking and biking.

Strategies:

- 1 Over time, make important tradeoffs to replace street parking and vehicle lanes with safe bike lanes and wider sidewalks.
- 2 Create better bike facilities on east-west corridors, like Park Road and Irving Street.
- 3 Keep existing dedicated bus lanes and bus priority along 14th Street.
- 4 Keep existing protected bike lanes clear of illegally parked cars and other obstacles.
- 5 Explore opportunities to simplify traffic intersections with pedestrian and bike priority.





Accessible public realm network

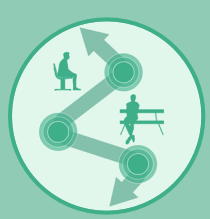
Reconnect public spaces to sidewalks

Most public spaces in the area are surrounded by car traffic, which disconnects plazas and parks from the public realm and creates less safe conditions for pedestrians.

Strategies:

- 1 Identify street segments that could be pedestrianized or expanded to plazas.
- 2 Explore tools to make pedestrian crossings safer.
- 3 Continue to enact temporary street closures during specific events or seasons.





Regular rhythm of comfortable places

Introduce moments of rest to make a continuously comfortable and accessible street network

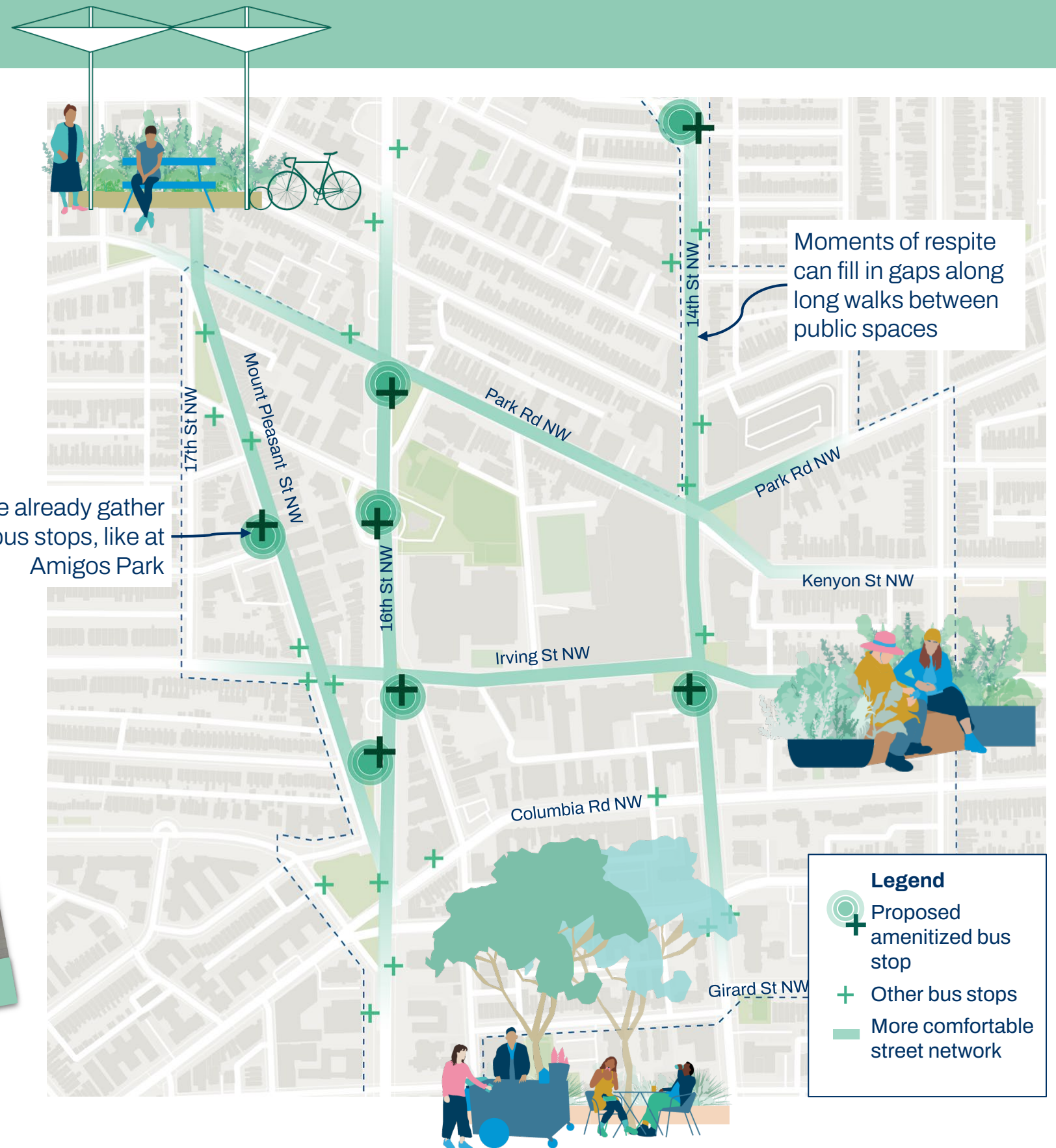
Nearly 400,000 people ride Metrobus daily, yet many streets are not comfortable for walking or waiting. A lack of shaded, welcoming places makes transit use unpleasant and discourages lingering, which also impacts nearby businesses. Enhancing comfort will create a more inviting network that supports both community life and local commerce.

Strategies:

- 1 Add comfortable, shaded seating along streets.
- 2 Where possible, extend curbs or add parklets to create additional area for greenery and seating.
- 3 Place inviting elements where people wait for transit: better shade, greenery, water fountains, bike racks.



People already gather near bus stops, like at Amigos Park





Equitable distribution of great public spaces

Create more inviting spaces and reasons to stay, especially at key neighborhood entry points.

While there are ample public spaces, not all of them invite lingering and enjoyment. In fact, without programming, public parks in the area on average perform worse than streets as places people spend time. In addition to upgrading beloved plazas, there is a great opportunity to work with NPS to optimize community assets.

Strategies:

- 1 More equitably distribute inviting public spaces by enhancing moments of arrival to the area.
- 2 Upgrade and repair significant plazas with more comfortable and greater variety of furnishings.
- 3 Coordinate with NPS to identify opportunities to transform their spaces with capital improvements, enhanced maintenance, programming, and public amenities.
- 4 Add interactive public art at key sites to signal a sense of community identity and arrival.





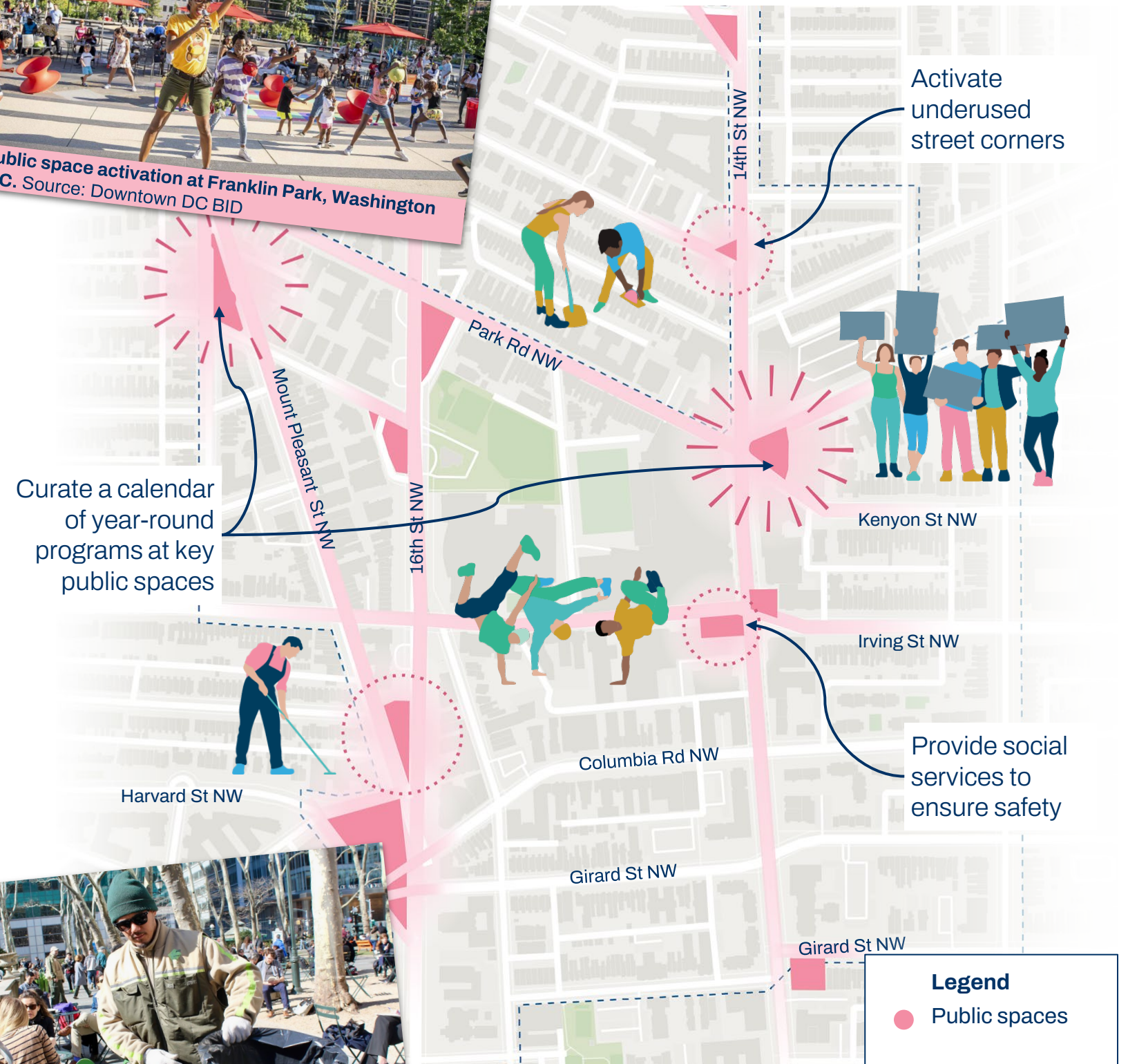
A well-cared for and active public realm

Add more hands to support management, stewardship, and activation of public spaces

There are maintenance and stewardship challenges, resulting from fragmented jurisdiction across neighborhoods. More coordinated, empowered stewards such as a business/community improvement district can improve the capital and operational aspects of the two neighborhoods.

Strategies:

- 1 Create place management and maintenance entities to take care of both neighborhoods.
- 2 Establish a maintenance plan with clear jurisdictions and responsibilities, including timely garbage collection, maintaining trees, and repairing paving.
- 3 Activate public spaces with consistent programming, including at underutilized corners and intersections.
- 4 Support local businesses' transition from a temporary to permanent streetery program.
- 5 Provide social services to those in need to ensure public health and safety.





2

Public Life & Existing Conditions Report

- 2.1 Public Life Findings
- 2.2 Public Realm Findings

How we study public life & public space

Observing people in public space – who they are, how they choose to move, what they choose to do, and where they choose to be — helps the Office of Planning to understand a day in the life in these neighborhoods. The OP team studied people moving and spending time in six distinct zones of Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant over three days in July 2024. At the same time, the team conducted analysis of the public realm through multiple site visits, mapping, and past DC planning documents.

DC was in the midst of a heat wave during the observation period. The hot temperatures may have suppressed overall usage of the public realm; however, the findings from the study reveal patterns of usage that can inform public realm investment and provide insight into the demands placed on public spaces in a warming climate.

Saturday, July 6th
9am & 12pm

98F

Sunday, July 7th
7am - 9pm

95F

Tuesday, July 9th
7am - 9pm

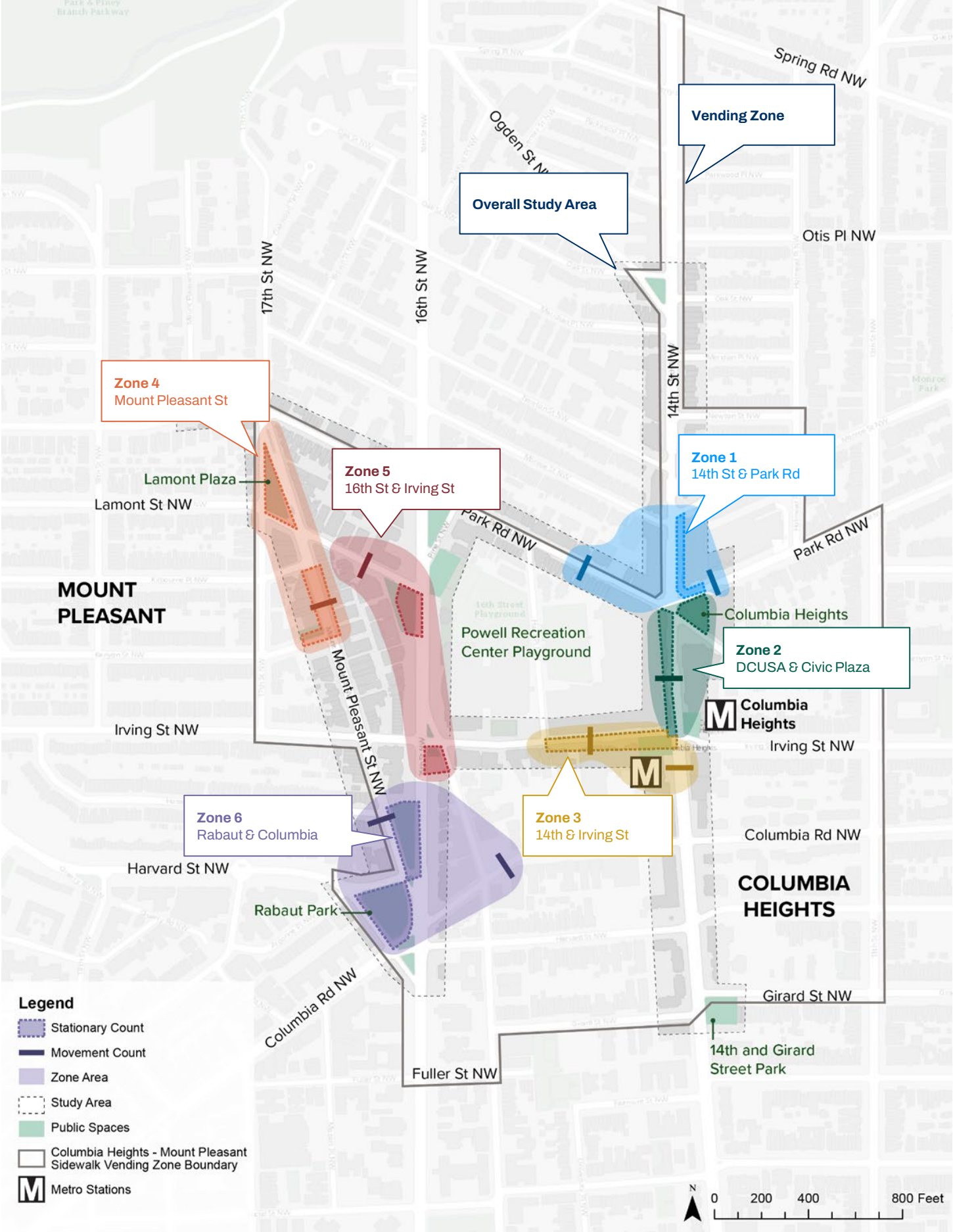
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Project team on site studying public life



A volunteer observing people moving on 14th



Comments from residents

On July 8 and July 10, 2024, the project team led two community “walkshops” (walking workshops) to guide residents through the study area and gather feedback on public realm conditions. The same prompts were also shared on the project website where 611 respondents provided their input.



Community walkshop at Lamont Plaza in Mount Pleasant

Overall Experience

The public spaces and identity of both Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant were widely appreciated, though they were not seen as living up to their full potential as vibrant or inclusive neighborhoods. Poor maintenance of public spaces, particularly the Civic Plaza and Lamont Plaza, was frequently cited as a concern. Improving walkability emerged as a top priority.

Brick-and-Mortar Businesses

Respondents expressed positive views about the diversity of businesses in the area, especially smaller shops and local food establishments along Mount Pleasant Street. Streateries were regarded as beneficial, but there were calls for better maintenance and adherence to aesthetic standards.

Sidewalk Vending

Perceptions of vending were mixed. Congestion at the intersection of 14th and Irving Streets was noted as a key issue. Suggested improvements included creating designated vending spaces, establishing regulated kiosks or stations, strengthening regulatory enforcement, and organizing market days.

Connectivity and Walkability

Concerns were raised about vehicles moving too fast and creating dangerous pedestrian intersections. Respondents frequently pointed to the dominance of car traffic and the discomfort of walking along narrow sidewalks, particularly near Park Road. Though Metrorail transit was recognized as a highly used mode of transportation, entrances were described as unclean and unsafe.

Expression of Place

The unique character and charm of Mount Pleasant were deeply appreciated, while opinions about the bustling energy of Columbia Heights remained divided. Suggestions for enhancing the sense of place in both neighborhoods included adding more play structures in parks, increasing tree canopy for shade and beautification, and improving the overall ambiance of public spaces.

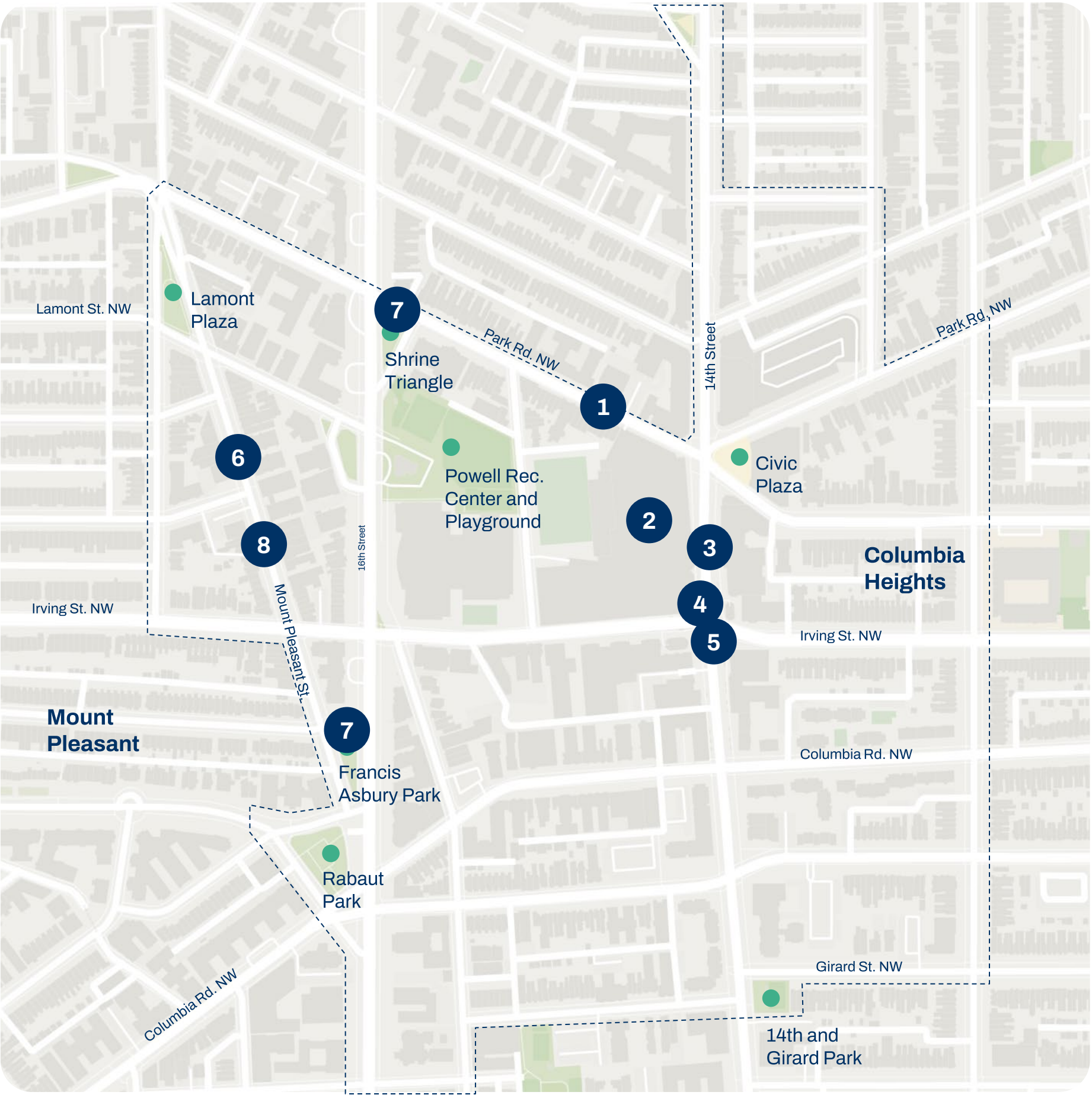
Public Spaces

Public spaces in both neighborhoods were seen as well-loved and frequently used, but the need for better upkeep and more functional design was emphasized. Recommendations included expanding spaces for community activities, such as farmers markets, and introducing amenities like additional seating and pedestrian-friendly features to make these areas more accessible and versatile for daily life.

Comments from residents

From the walkshop engagement, participants offered a number of site-specific comments and ideas for improvement.

- 1 Participants call out Park Road for sidewalks that are too narrow and limited shade.
- 2 Many residents noted that the DC USA parking garage is often underutilized and is an opportunity to leverage if other on-street parking is repurposed for pedestrian use.
- 3 Many people said biking along 14th Street is difficult as the bike lane between Park Rd and Irving St is often blocked.
- 4 The intersection at 14th St and Irving is known to be quite congested with pedestrian and vending activity — people also noted that the crosswalks feel dangerous due to wide roads.
- 5 Multiple people brought up the Metro Plaza as a location where they do not feel safe.
- 6 Maintenance of the brick paving in Mount Pleasant is inconsistent and presents tripping hazards.
- 7 NPS-owned spaces, like Francis Asbury Park, feel underutilized, and the lack of sufficient lighting at night makes the spaces feel unsafe.
- 8 Mount Pleasant Street is regarded as a small business “Main Street”, where the streateries positively add to the culture of the neighborhood.



Public life and existing conditions takeaways

Finding #1

Active and vibrant neighborhoods with untapped potential

Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant are active and vibrant neighborhoods, serving as both major thoroughfares and destinations. However, they have potential to encourage more people to spend time, especially in public spaces like Civic Plaza and Lamont Plaza on a day-to-day basis.

How might we respond?
The public realm must be equipped to accommodate large volumes of pedestrians and cyclists moving through the neighborhoods throughout the day and week. While there is an abundance of public space, much of it lacks the necessary infrastructure, amenities, and programming to serve the public.

Finding #2

Unique neighborhood character enhanced by small businesses

Storefront businesses, street vendors, and historic architecture give these neighborhoods a unique cultural character. Local commerce, public art, and community-driven initiatives collectively contribute to the vibrant multicultural atmosphere.

How might we respond?
Improvements to the public realm must take into consideration the existing cultural and commercial character of these neighborhoods, taking care to celebrate, enhance and build upon these elements.

Finding #3

Vending activity is creating congested public spaces

Street commerce plays a role in bringing life and gender diversity to public space. Sidewalk vending makes public spaces more dynamic, but it is greatly increasing congestion, especially along already busy pedestrian corridors.

How might we respond?
Designate and enforce spaces where vendors can operate to reduce sidewalk congestion and improve pedestrian flow.

Finding #4

Perception of safety tied to activation of public spaces

When not activated by farmers markets, plazas and parks in both neighborhoods were male-dominated, with few women and children observed spending time in the public realm. This behavioral pattern may indicate a lack of perception of safety.

How might we respond?
The presence of women in the public realm is often used as a proxy for perception of public safety. Few women spending time in public spaces is a strong indication that it may not feel safe for them to do so. Creating a public realm that feels and is safe will create an inclusive and inviting environment for all demographics.

Public life and existing conditions takeaways

Finding #5

Disconnected streetscapes and multimodal challenges

The streets in the study area are major connectors for cars, buses, bikes, and pedestrians. However, the fragmented design of streets and traffic patterns creates a disjointed and sometimes chaotic experience.

How might we respond?
The neighborhoods are in need of more cohesive streetscapes with better infrastructure, traffic strategies, and accessible public amenities to encourage a smoother, safer experience for all modes of transportation and public life.

Finding #6

Lack of comfort in the public realm, especially along streets

Residents of Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant are within walking or biking distance from many daily amenities, but connecting streets lack shade and comfort.

How might we respond?
Streets must be comfortable and encourage order to enable a better culture of walking and biking. Wide sidewalks and bike lanes will only go so far if environmental conditions render these spaces uncomfortable to use.

Finding #7

Transit hubs as vital anchors for public life

Bus stops and other transit hubs are vital points of public life. These transit points serve as anchors for social interaction and commerce, enhancing the vibrancy of the streetscape.

How might we respond?
Although the community largely relies on Metrobus, many bus stops are not adequately shaded or equipped with sufficient seating. This makes waiting for public transit physically uncomfortable.

Finding #8

The public realm requires additional maintenance

From unique pavers to one-of-a-kind water features, specialty elements in Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant can have complex maintenance needs and pose accessibility challenges.

How might we respond?
An enjoyable public realm depends on a continued commitment to maintaining it in the long-run. Enhanced stewardship is needed to fix tripping hazards, restore the look and feel of the neighborhoods, and repair signature elements.

2.1

Public Life Findings

Key observations on public life in Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant

Finding #1

Active Neighborhoods

Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant are highly active neighborhoods that people both pass through and enjoy spending time in.

Finding #2

Vibrant Places with Potential

More people pass through the two neighborhoods than spend time in their public spaces.

Finding #3

Creative Ways to Enjoy Space

Locals enhance public spaces by putting out their own belongings, highlighting the need for better infrastructure and amenities.

Finding #4

Unique Public Spaces

Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant have ample public spaces, but their design needs improvement to encourage greater use.

Finding #5

Male-dominant Public Spaces

More men were observed spending time in public space than women, which indicates the perception of a lack of public safety.

Finding #6

Vending and Farmers Markets Bring Diversity

Vending and farmers markets introduce greater gender diversity to the study area.

Finding #7

Farmers Markets and Vending Bring Activity

Farmers markets and vending activate some underutilized public spaces and contribute to congestion on busy corridors.

Finding #8

Sparse Seating

There was a general lack of comfortable public seating, especially near retail areas where it is most needed.

Finding #9

Streets with Potential

Though parks and plazas entice people to stop and spend time, the area's streets fail to encourage people to linger or gather.

Finding #10

Bus Stops as Community Anchors

Bus stops serve as key anchors for public life, bringing people together and supporting commuting and community interaction.

Finding #1

Active Neighborhoods

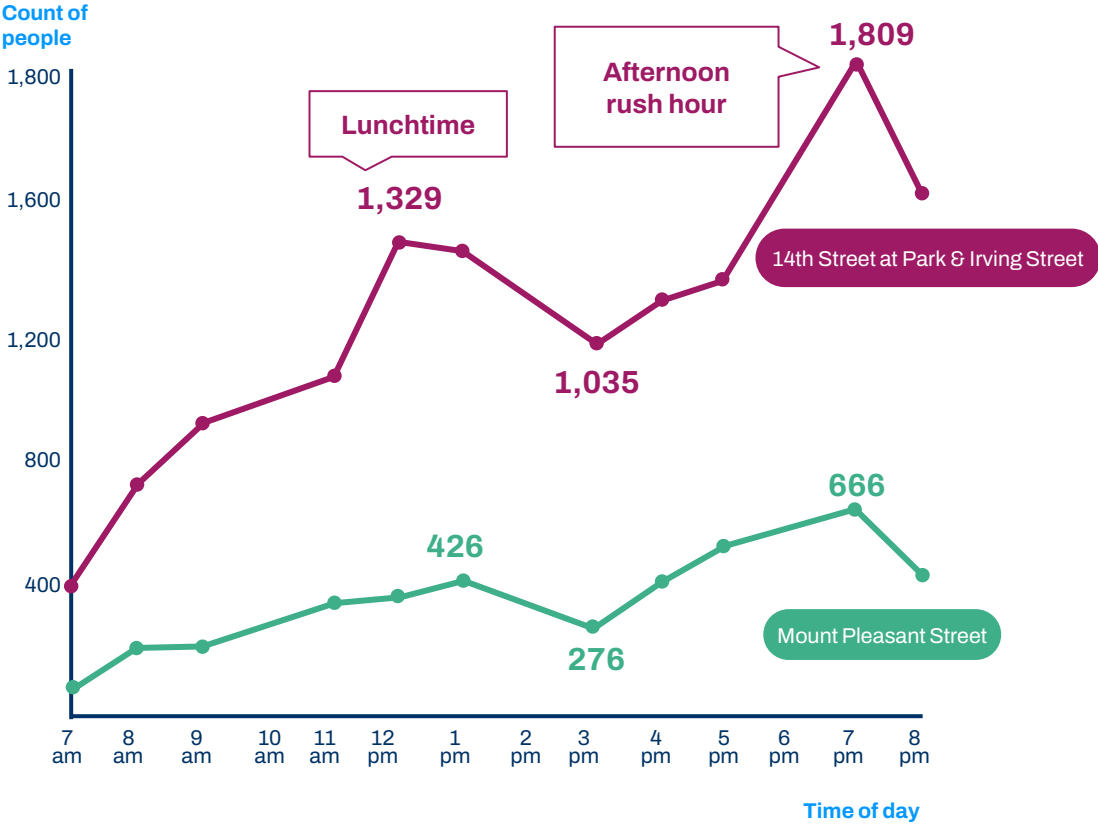
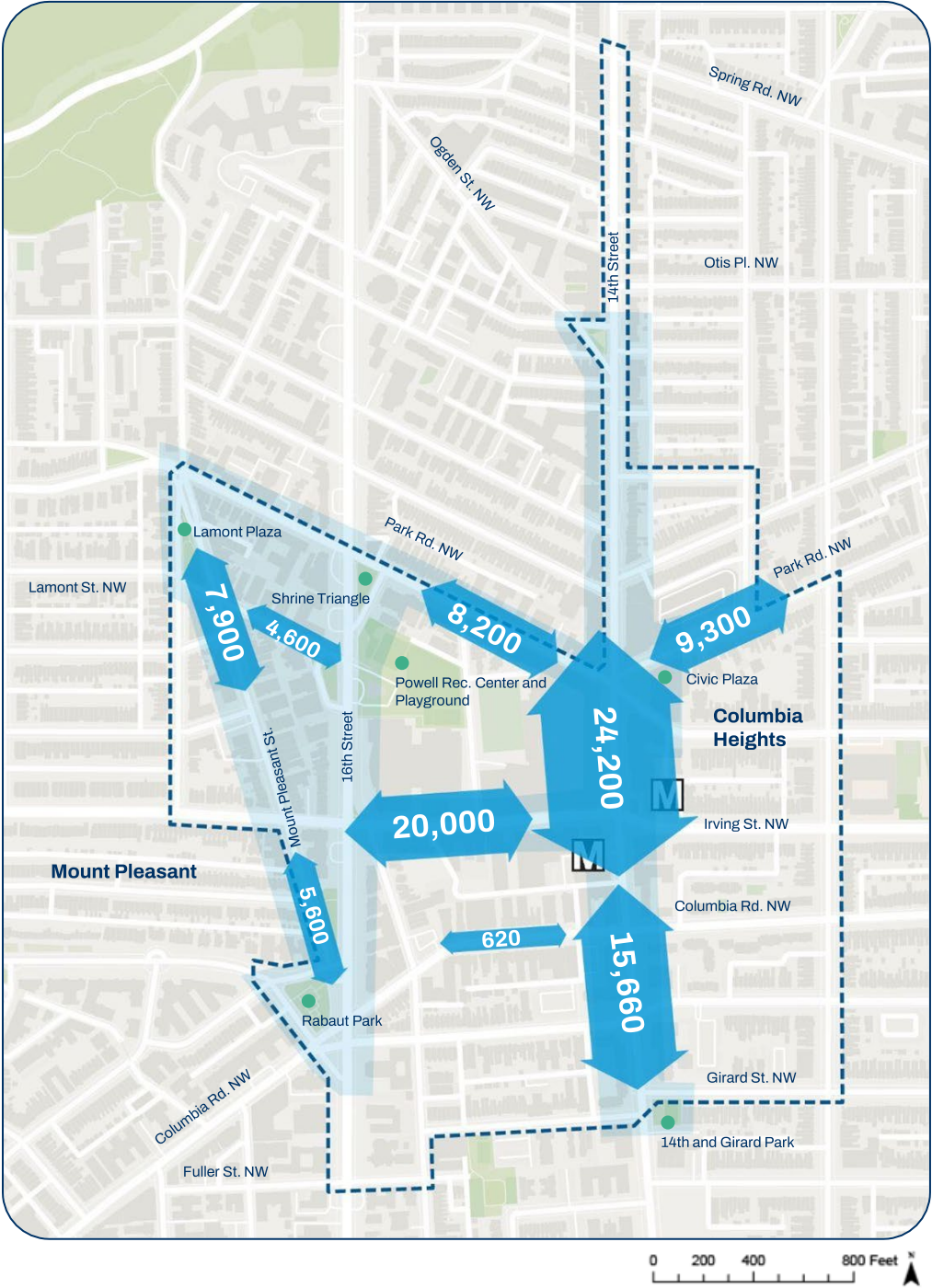
Movement data revealed both neighborhoods to be highly trafficked, with the vast majority of pedestrian activity on 14th Street.

Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant are highly active neighborhoods that people both pass through and enjoy spending time in.

14th Street saw the highest volumes of pedestrian traffic between Irving Street and Park Road, this is a hotspot for pedestrian activity. In comparison, Mount Pleasant Street saw lower volumes of traffic overall, but at times was busier than 14th Street.

Both 14th Street and Mount Pleasant Street saw an uptick in pedestrian movement in the late evening, perhaps owing to the post-work rush or cooler temperatures.

Movement data:



↑ Movement activity observed over time along 14th Street and Mount Pleasant Street.

← Movement counts recorded in the study area - with the most movement activity observed along the 14th Street vending corridor.

Most movement activity was observed along 14th Street

Finding #1

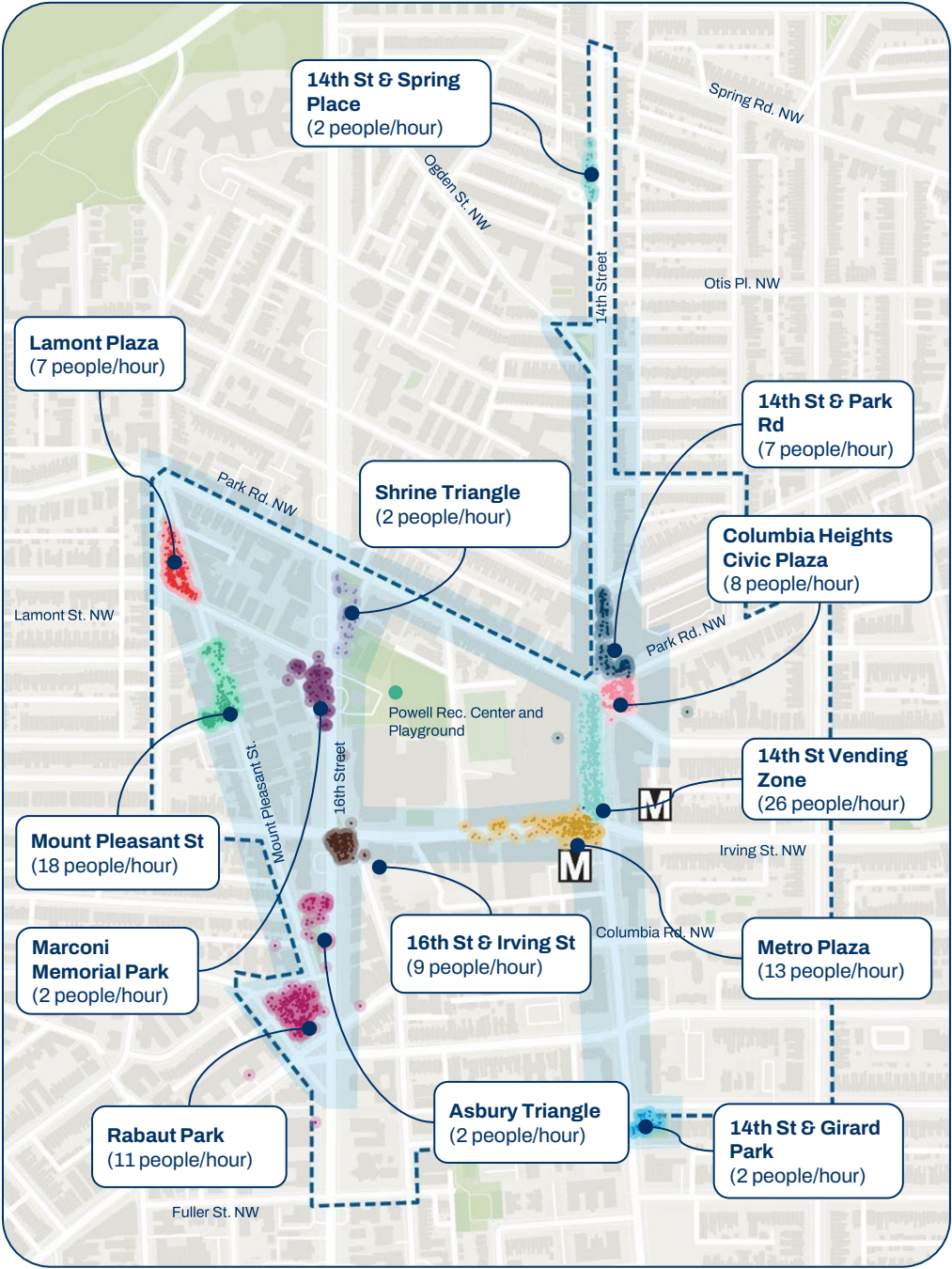
Active Neighborhoods

Stationary counts showed that all the public spaces in both Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant saw daily activity, though streets were more popular than plazas.

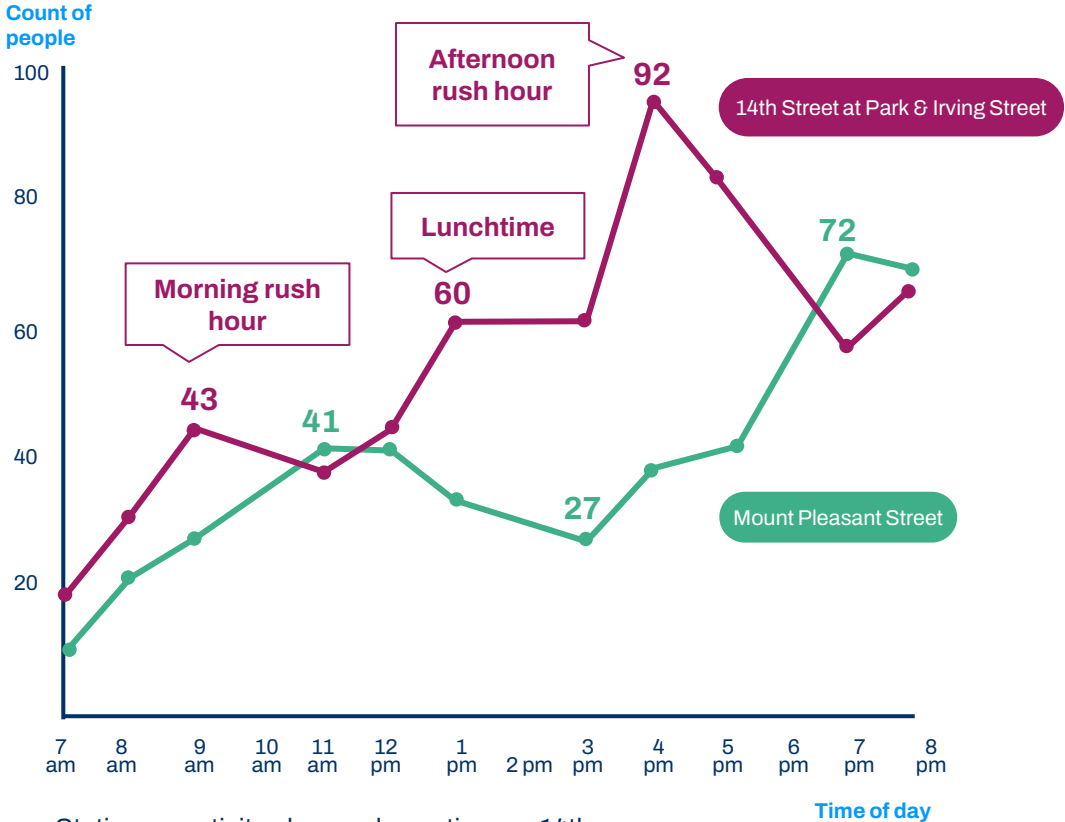
Stationary activity was distributed unevenly throughout the study area, with more people choosing to spend time on 14th Street and Mount Pleasant Street compared to in Civic Plaza or Lamont Plaza. While this may have been due to the hot weather, these findings underscore the need for climate resilient designs in public parks and plazas.

The number of people observed spending time in Civic Plaza and Lamont Plaza increased during the evening, perhaps due to the cooling weather. The number of people observed spending time on Mount Pleasant Street also increased during the evening, while 14th Street saw a sharp drop in staying activity after 4pm, signalling that it may not be a desirable place to spend time in the evenings and at night.

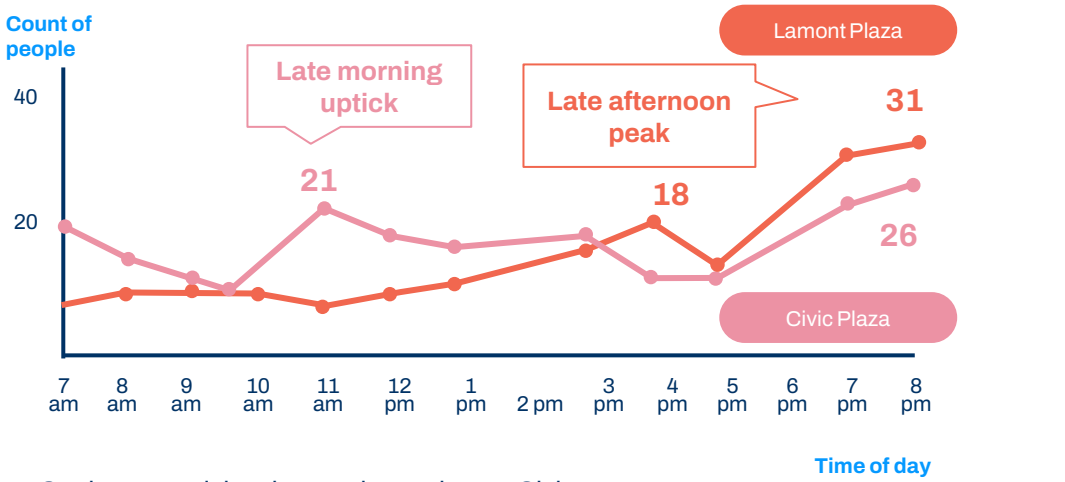
Stationary data:



Average number of stationary counts per hour recorded in the study area on Sunday and Tuesday.



Stationary activity observed over time on 14th Street and Mount Pleasant Street.



Stationary activity observed over time at Civic Plaza and Lamont Plaza on Sunday and Tuesday.

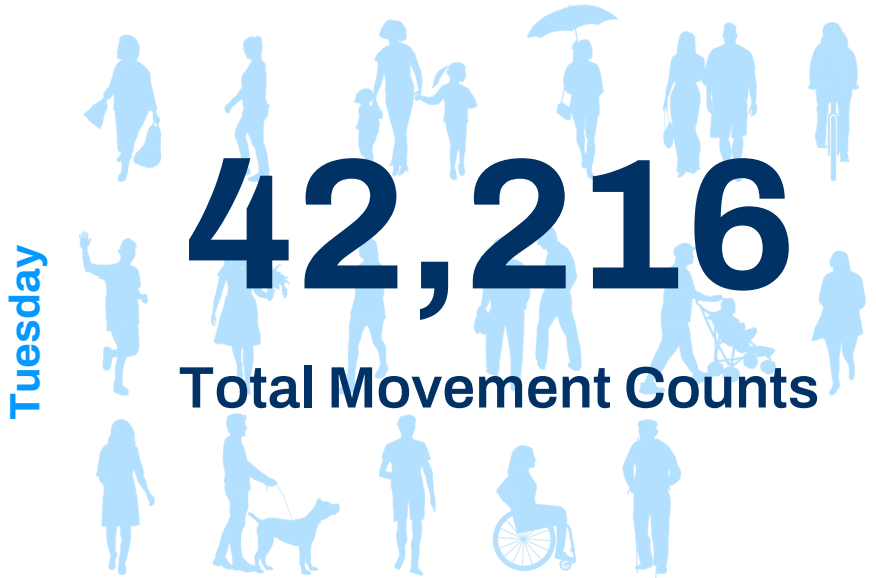
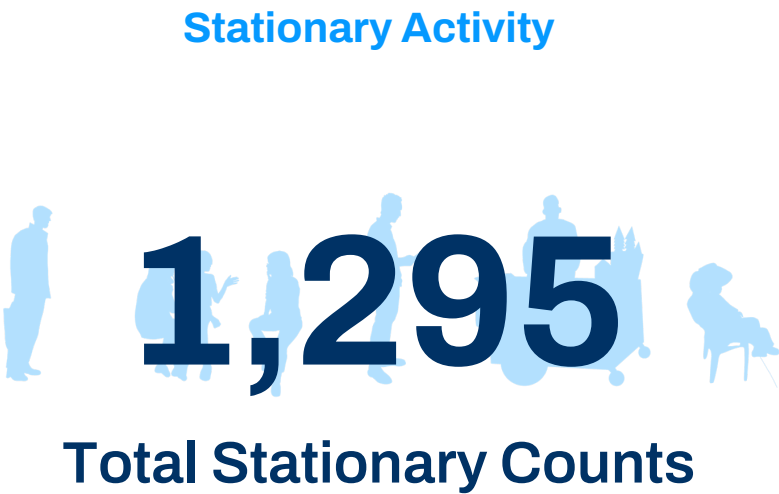
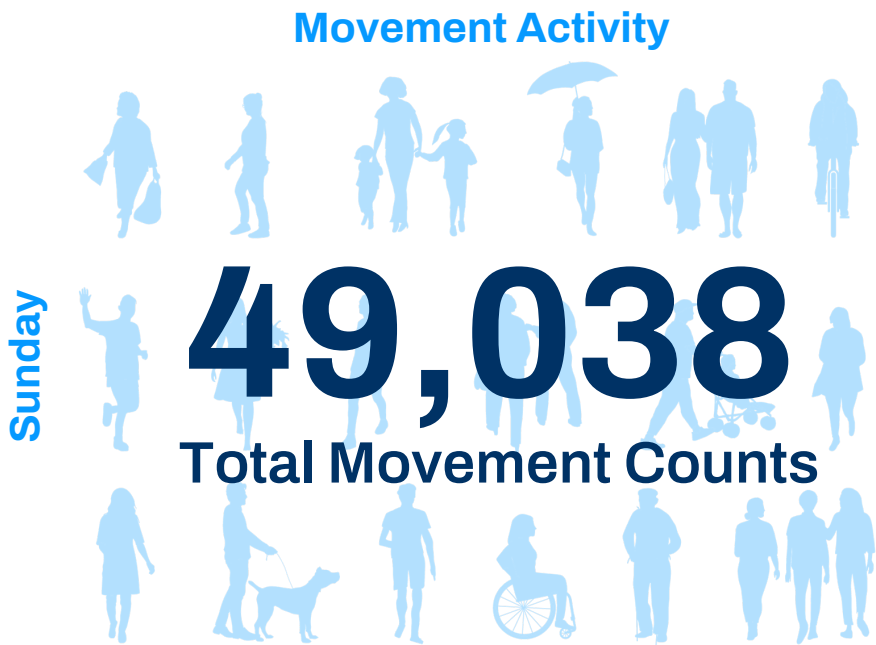
Finding #1

Active Neighborhoods

There was consistent activity during the weekday and weekend observation, a good indicator that there is a healthy mix of retail, amenities, and experiences that bring people to the area no matter the day of the week.

When comparing the total volumes of people moving and spending time between the weekend and weekday periods, the totals are relatively similar. Sunday saw more people moving through the area (16% more people moving than Tuesday), and a minor uptick in people spending time in the area (7% increase compared to Tuesday).

This relative consistency is a positive indicator. It reflects the area’s healthy mix of retail, amenities, and activities that attract people to the public realm throughout the week. In contrast, other areas that are more specialized in purpose, like central business districts, often experience greater differences in activity between weekends and weekdays.



Finding #1

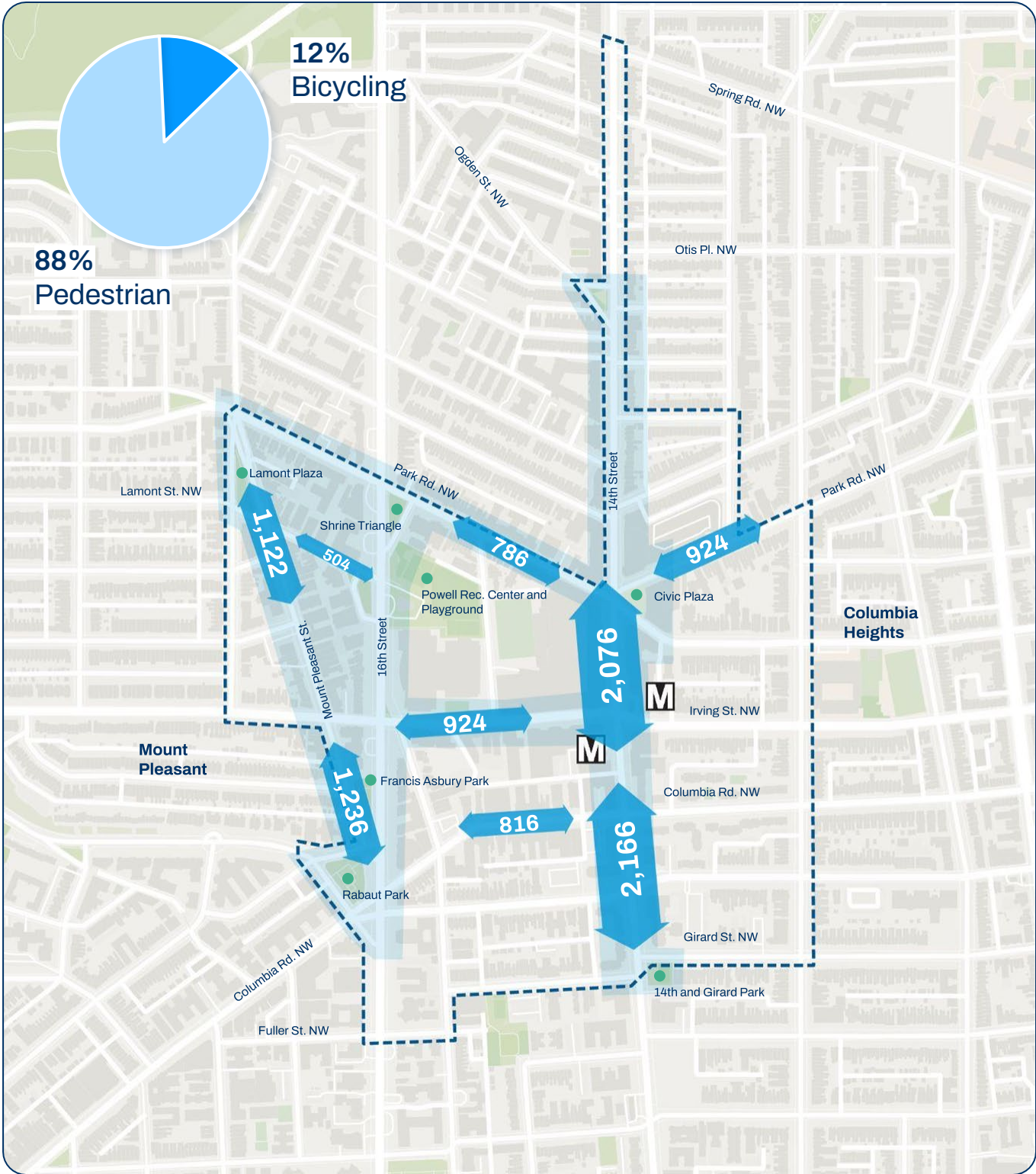
Active Neighborhoods

Biking was very prevalent along north-south routes but less so along east-west routes between Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant.

Biking was observed throughout the area, generally following similar trends in terms of volume as pedestrian activity. The bulk of biking was seen along 14th Street. Overall, 12% of people observed moving through the area were on bikes, compared to DDOT’s recent survey that found that 5% of DC residents ride a bicycle to work everyday. Men were observed to bike in the area much more than women, with 71% of all observed bikers being men. Stakeholders also noted that broader east–west connectivity challenges through Mount Pleasant and across Rock Creek Park contribute to lower biking volumes on these routes.

Though there are bike lanes (some shared with cars and others separated along certain street segments), many people were observed biking on sidewalks, especially on east-west routes. With parked cars, moving traffic, and buses all competing for tight space along streets, some bikers appeared to favor sidewalks for their comfort and safety.

Movement data, bicycling:



Biking counts in Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant showed that most bikers were observed along 14th Street corridor.



Captions
1. There was a lot of biking on sidewalks along east-west connections between Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant.
2. On Columbia Road, cars, buses, and bikes all competed for limited space.

Finding #2

Vibrant Places with Potential

Overall, the study area was not a "sticky place": More people passed through than stopped to spend time.

“Stickiness” is defined as the number of people spending time in a space relative to the number of people moving through the space. A “sticky place” is one that inspires people to stop and spend time, a positive indication of how safe, comfortable, and pleasant the place is. For example, in Kendall Square in Cambridge, MA, 1 in every 10 people stop to spend time, indicating a public realm that is very inviting to public life. In contrast, only 1 in every 130 people stopped to spend time in Columbia Heights Civic Plaza during our observations, indicating a public realm that is not as inviting.

Despite low overall volumes of people spending time in the study area, those who did spend time were participating in social activities. 33% of people observed were engaging in conversation and 20% were people watching. Such activities indicate potential for a vibrant, social and activated public realm.

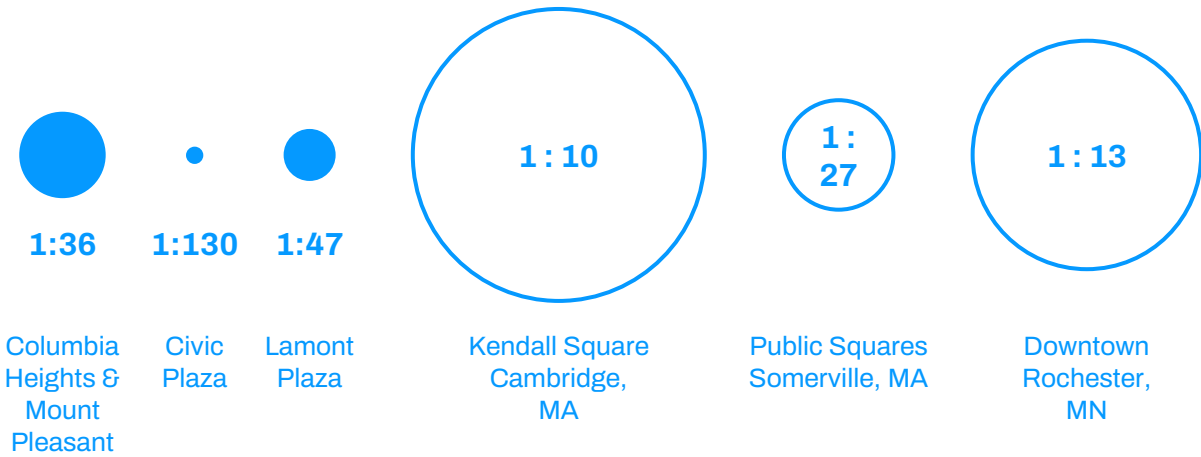
Stickiness of public spaces:

Overall, 1 person stayed for every 36 people who moved through the study area.

In Civic Plaza, 1 person stayed for every 130 people who moved through.

In Lamont Plaza, 1 person stayed for every 47 people who moved through.

The study area is generally less sticky than other sites.



Most common activities observed among people spending time:



Finding #3

Creative Ways to Enjoy Space

Residents brought their own seating and games to enjoy public spaces.

Particularly in Mount Pleasant, locals enhance public spaces by putting out their own belongings. Amigos Park, Mount Pleasant Street, and Park Road were hot spots for public life despite gaps in available infrastructure and amenities in the public realm.

At Amigos Park, residents brought umbrellas, coolers, and games with them, which transformed the bare-bones space into a vibrant community hang-out.

These ad hoc improvements indicate residents’ desire to spend time together in neighborhood public spaces and a need for better infrastructure and amenities to foster existing public life.

Ad Hoc Public Life



At Amigos Park, 68% of those observed were sitting informally, and nearly 30% were playing -- 18% of whom were playing a card game.

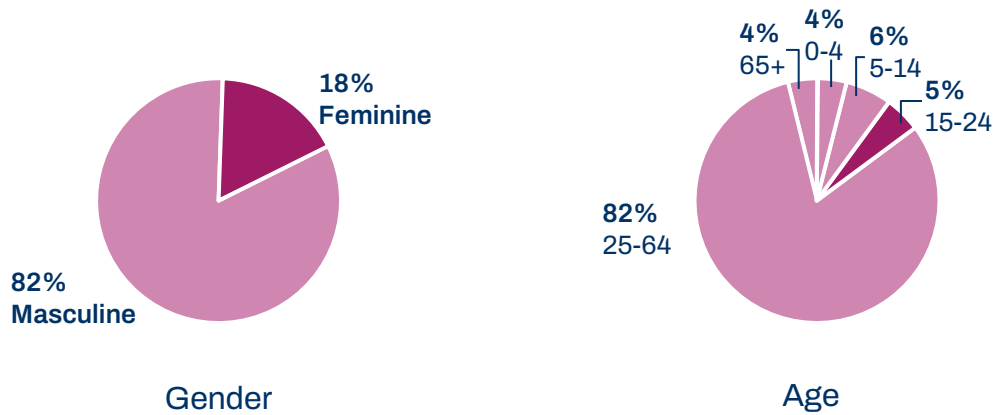
Finding #4

Unique Public Spaces

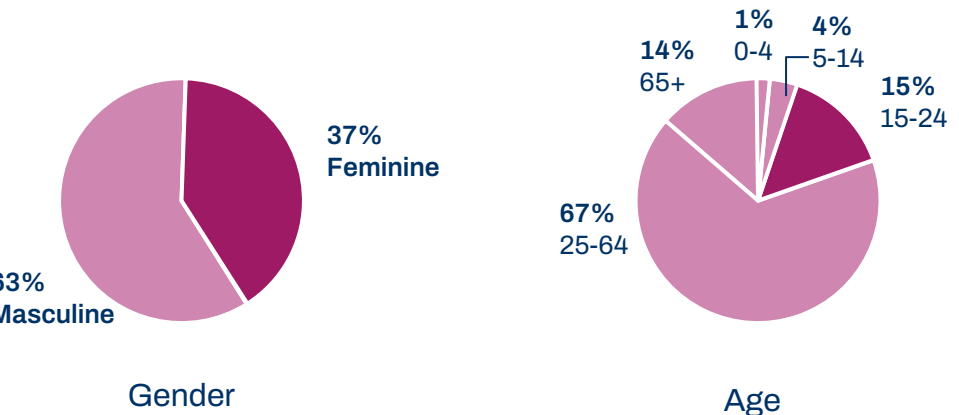
Perhaps due to the heat, public spaces in Columbia Heights were not too busy with people spending time during our observation period.

Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant have ample public spaces, each with distinct characteristics. In Columbia Heights, Civic Plaza and Metro Plaza are spacious components of the public realm, but they underperform in terms of the public life they invite and foster. During our observations, aside from during the farmers market, only 8 people spent time in Civic Plaza per hour. Metro Plaza was slightly more active with 13 people spending time there per hour, the majority of whom were waiting for public transit at the bus stop. Interestingly, we observed a higher proportion of youth at Metro Plaza than at other public spaces in Columbia Heights.

These findings indicate that public space alone does not foster public life. Space quality, available amenities, and ongoing events & activation are necessary to activate the public realm and make it inviting for people to spend time there.



Sunday + Tuesday total: 186 staying ; 24,162 moving



Sunday + Tuesday total: 287 staying ; 12,072 moving

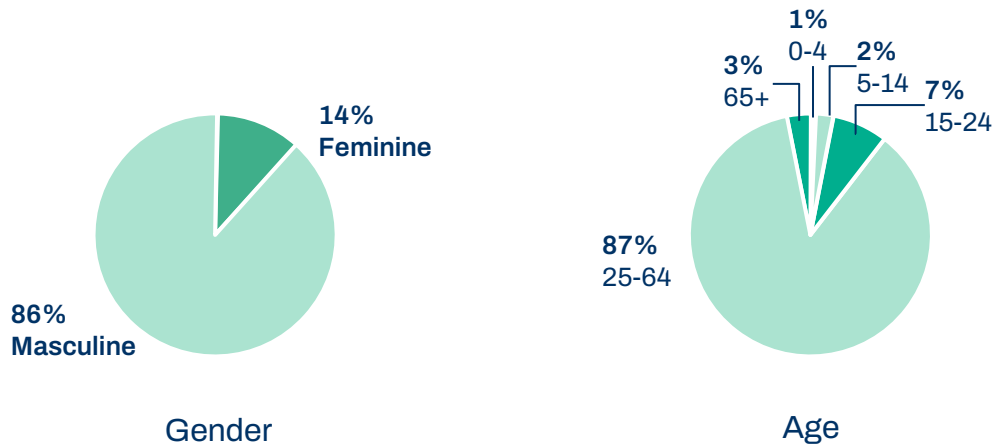
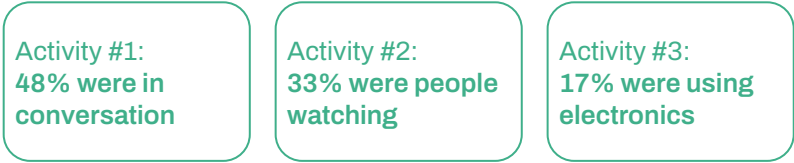
Finding #4

Unique Public Spaces

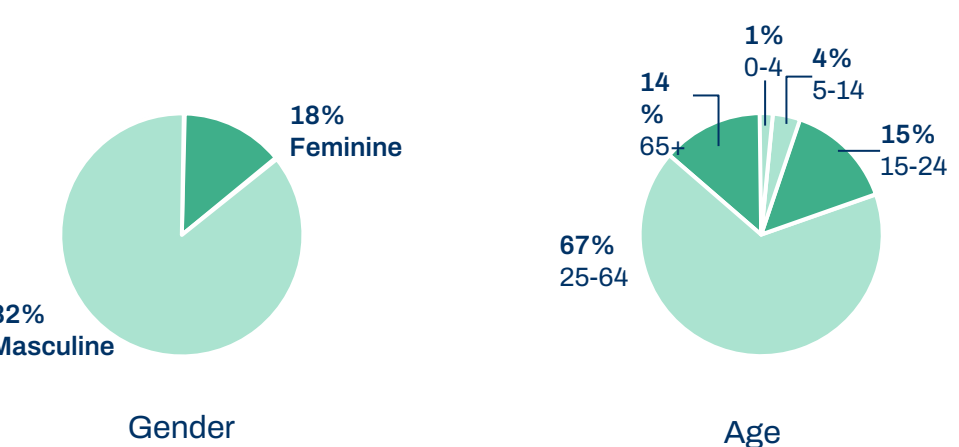
In Mount Pleasant, Lamont Plaza and Rabaut Park stand out as integral neighborhood public spaces.

Though only 1 in every 47 people who moved through stopped to spend time in Lamont Plaza, those who were spending time there seemed to use the space as an informal living room. This signals an important sense of safety & emotional comfort offered by the plaza. However, there was a lack of seating and protection from the sun during the hot day which may have contributed to the low levels of stickiness observed. The moveable chairs and tables that were present were very popular as they could be moved into the shade or reconfigured for large group social seating as necessary.

Rabaut Park offered a shady refuge and was the stickiest public space we observed in the study area – 1 in every 23 people who walked through stopped to spend time in the park. Additionally, higher proportions of older adults and youth were present, signalling that the park was inviting to a variety of ages.



Sunday + Tuesday total: 165 staying ; 7,902 moving



Sunday + Tuesday total: 246 staying ; 5,592 moving

Finding #5

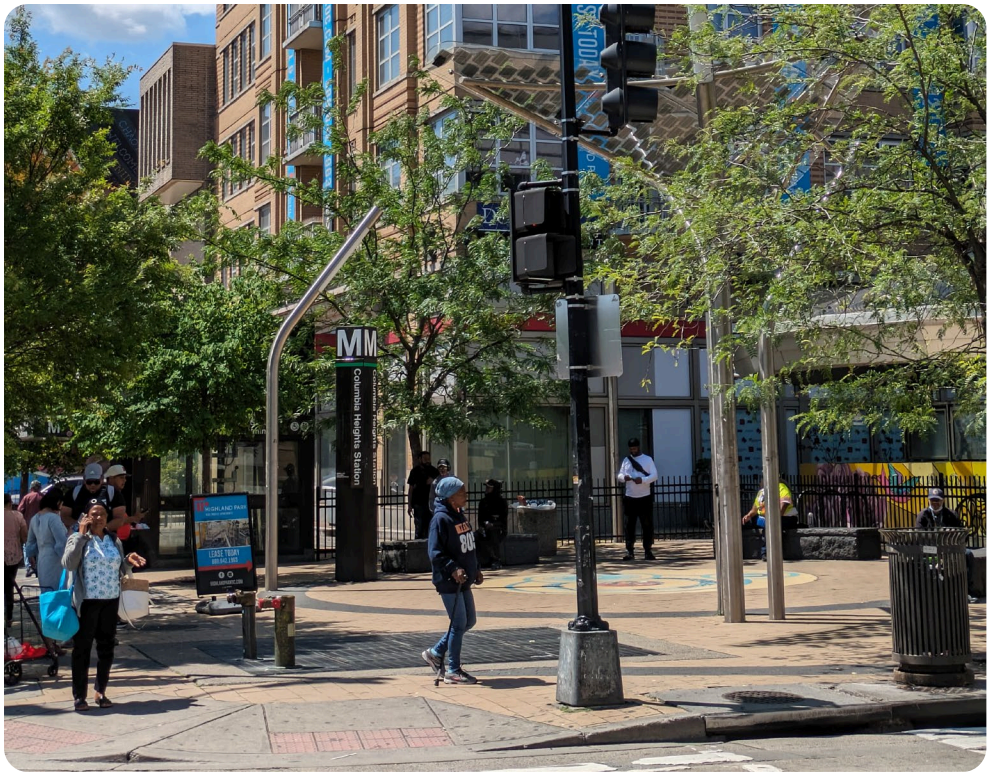
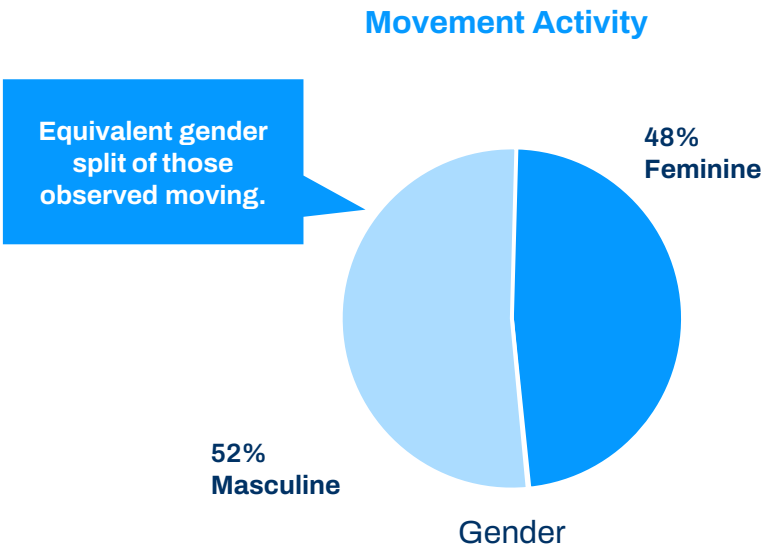
Male-dominant Public Spaces

Women moved through the study area, but less frequently stopped to spend time in public space.

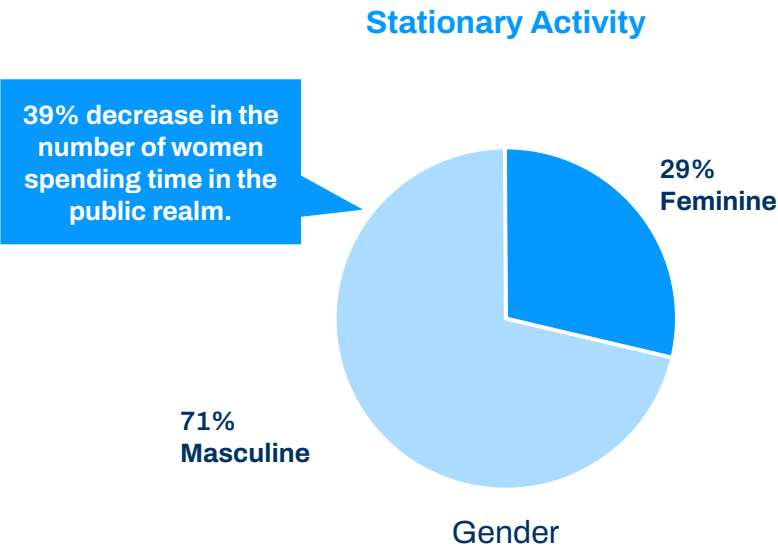
Across the study area, more men were observed spending time in public space than women. While men and women were observed moving through the public realms in equivalent volumes – indicating that women were indeed present in the public realm – dramatically fewer women were seen spending time in public spaces.

While it is difficult to pinpoint the exact cause, possible explanations could be the lack of activities available to women, children and families in general, the lack of a comfortable and pleasant environment, and the lack of perception of safety.

Movement and Stationary Activity Gender Split



Roughly equal proportions of men and women were observed moving through the study area.



The majority of individuals observed spending time in the study area were men.

Finding #5

Male-dominant Public Spaces

Public parks were observed to be more masculine spaces.

The majority of those observed spending time in public parks in the study area were men. The vast majority observed spending time in Amigos Parks, 14th and Girard Street Park and Rabaut Park in particular were men. While this is not a negative in and of itself, it could be creating unintended barriers into the public realm for women and children.

Relatively more women were observed spending time at Francis Asbury Park than other public parks, but 73% of the women observed there were waiting for public transit at the nearby bus stop. This signals that time spent at Francis Asbury Park was functional – part of a commute journey – rather than recreational.

A deep dive into public parks



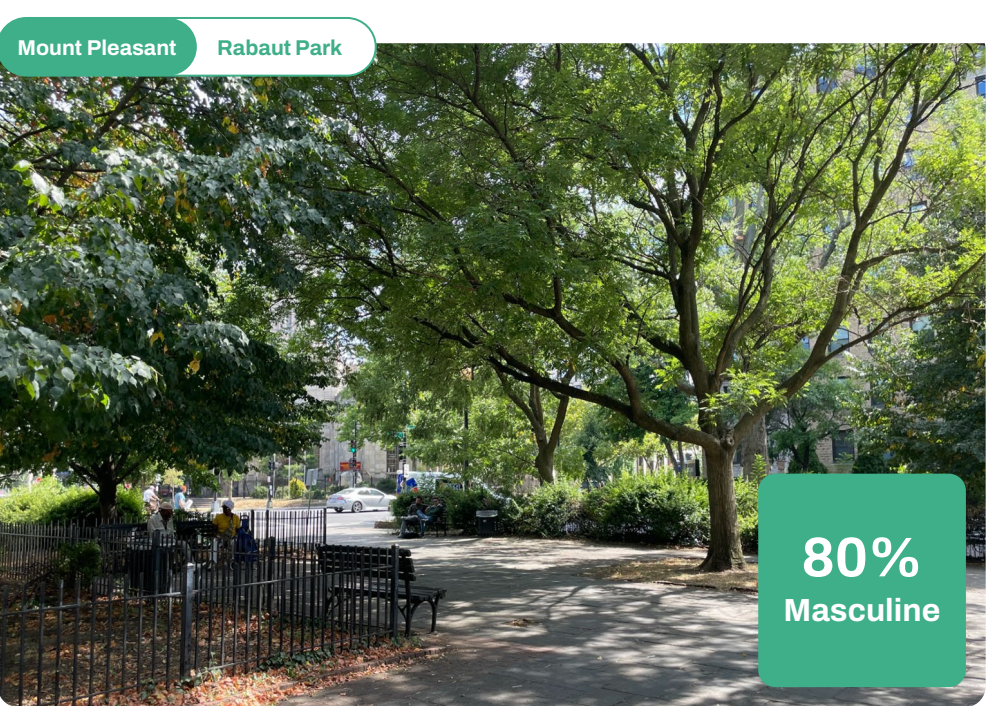
Amigos Park provided space for groups to gather and engage in unstructured activities like a game of cards.



14th and Girard Street Park was well shaded and created a pleasant environment for regular visitors.



Seating at Francis Asbury Park was in the direct sun and underutilized.



Rabaut Park was well shaded throughout the day functioning as a cool refuge during the hot days.

Finding #6

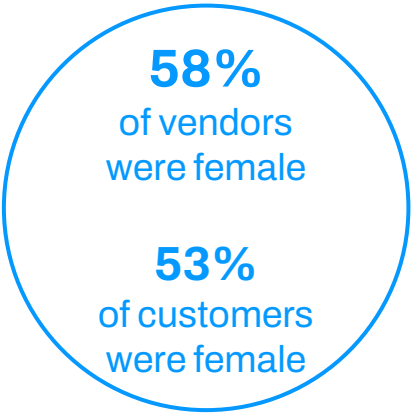
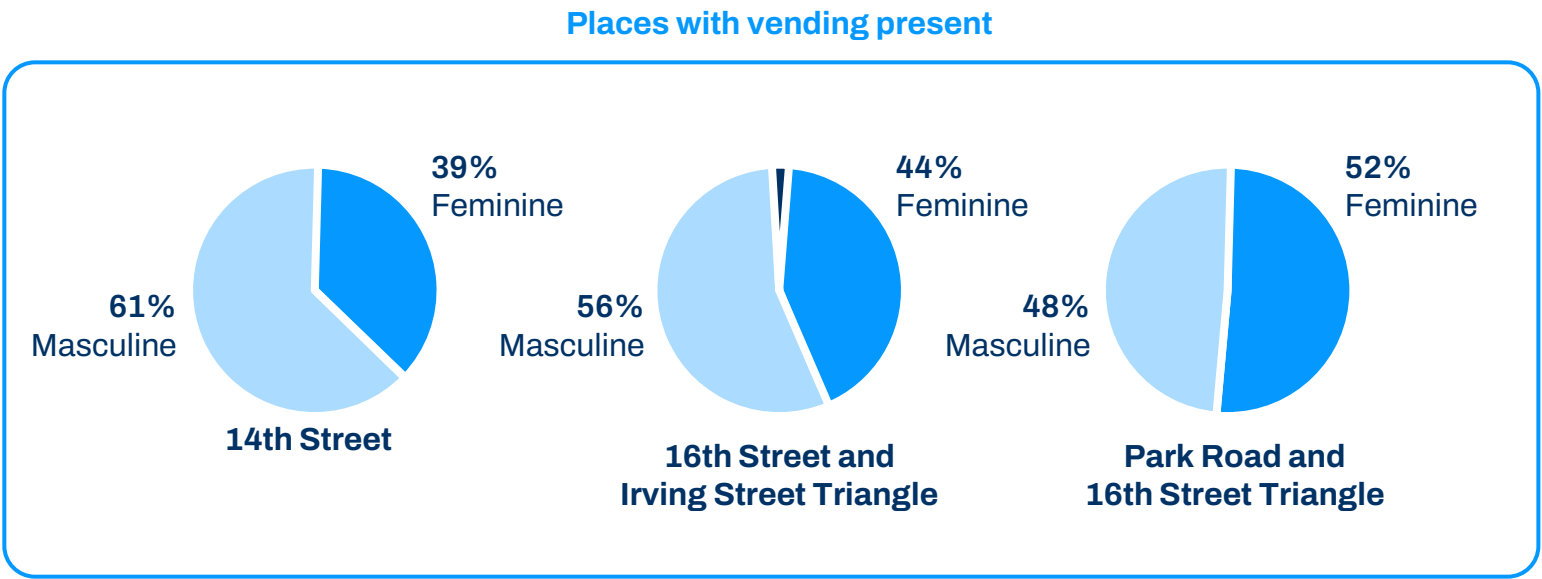
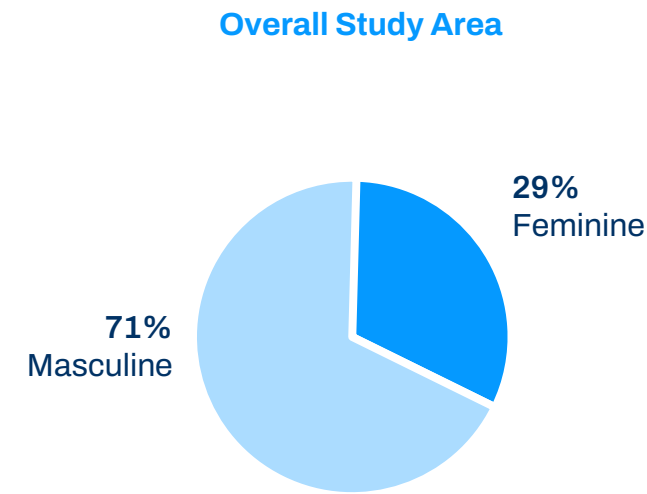
Vending and Farmers Markets Bring Diversity

Vending and farmers markets introduce greater gender diversity into the study area.

In comparison to the overall study area, we observed that places where street vending was present – 14th Street, 16th Street and Irving Street Triangle, and Park Road and 16th Street Triangle – had a greater number of women spending time in the public realm.

Taking a closer look at street vendors and their customers, we observed that slightly over half of each group were women. While these slight proportional differences may seem minor, the effect of women in the public realm cannot be understated as it often encourages other women and families to spend time in public spaces by boosting perceptions of safety.

Perceived Gender Comparison



* Overall Study area, excluding farmers market.

Finding #6

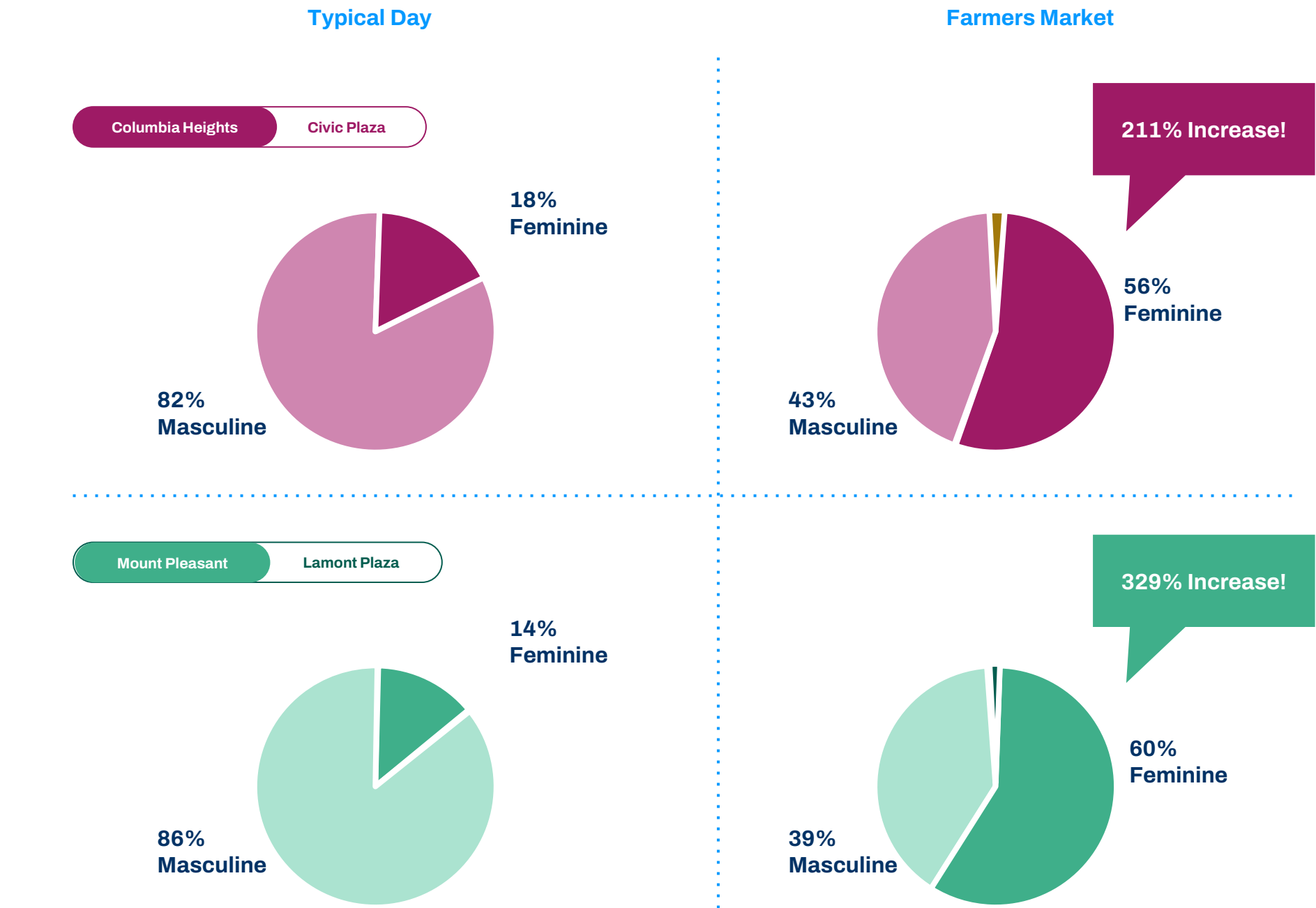
Vending and Farmers Markets Bring Diversity

We observed that the Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant farmers markets, that takes place in the neighborhoods, also increased gender diversity in the study area.

During our observations of the Saturday farmers market, over half of those spending time in Civic Plaza and Lamont Plaza were women. This was a significant increase in women in these spaces when compared to a typical day – a 211% increase in Civic Plaza and a 329% increase in Lamont Plaza.

This finding underscores that women are present in these neighborhoods and do participate in public life when they are invited to do so. Making space for women in the public realm could improve perceptions of comfort and safety in the public realm for all.

Typical Day and Farmers Market Day Gender Comparison



* Overall Study area, excluding farmers market.

Finding #7

Farmers Markets and Vending Bring Activity

Columbia Heights Civic Plaza and Lamont Plaza were generally underutilized except during the Saturday farmers markets.

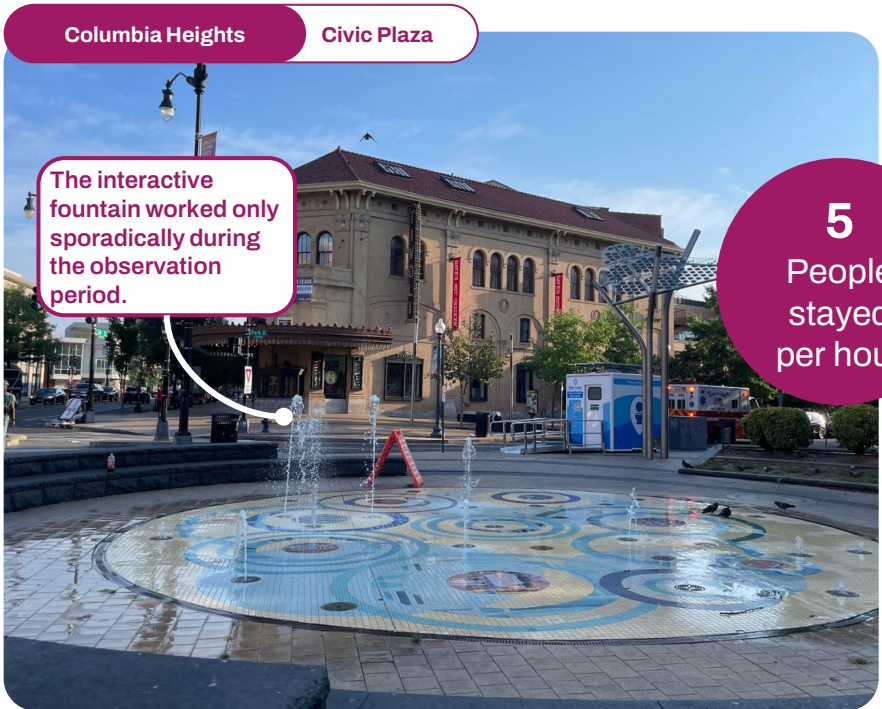
In addition to adding gender diversity to the study area, the farmers markets brought a massive uptick in pubic life to Civic Plaza and Lamont Plaza. While these plazas saw little activity on Tuesday, with only 5 people per hour observed spending time in Civic Plaza and only 6 people per hour observed spending time in Lamont Plaza, we observed a very different reality during the Saturday farmers markets. During the markets, Civic Plaza and Lamont Plaza both saw over 10 times as many people spending time.

This indicates community appetite for spending time in neighborhood public spaces, provided the right activities and events.

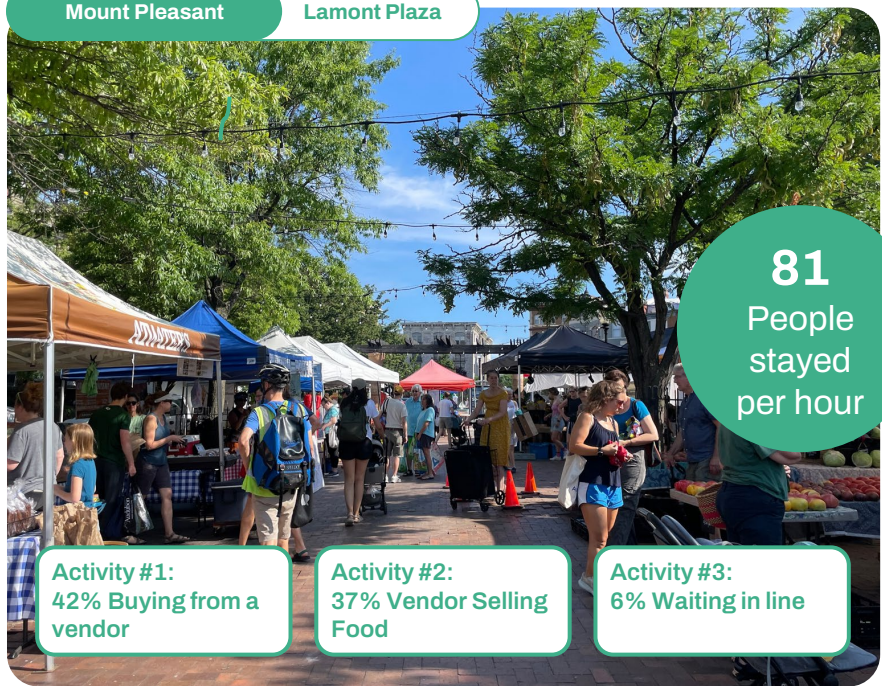
Farmers Market Day (10 am & 12 pm)



Tuesday (7am - 9pm)



Mount Pleasant Lamont Plaza



Mount Pleasant Lamont Plaza



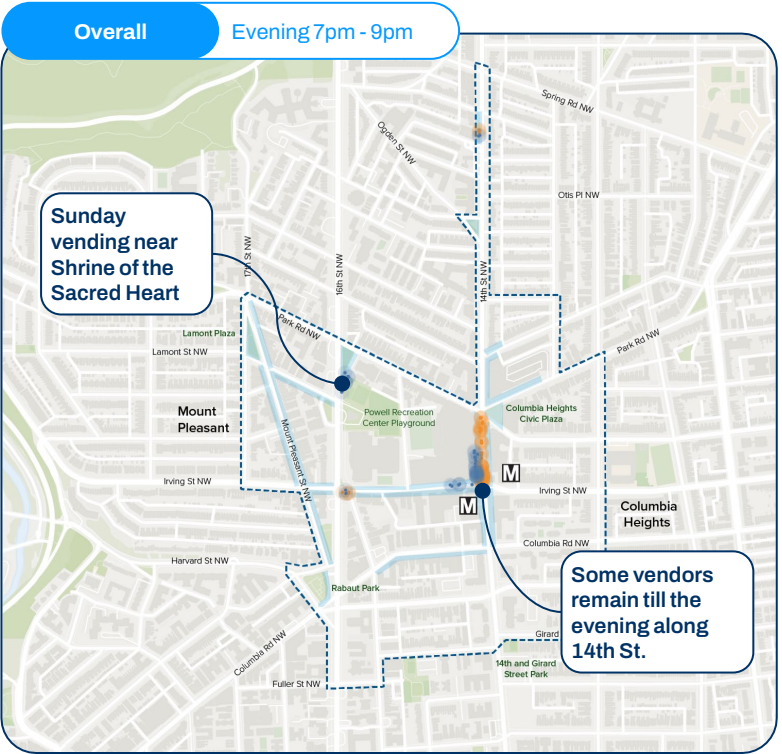
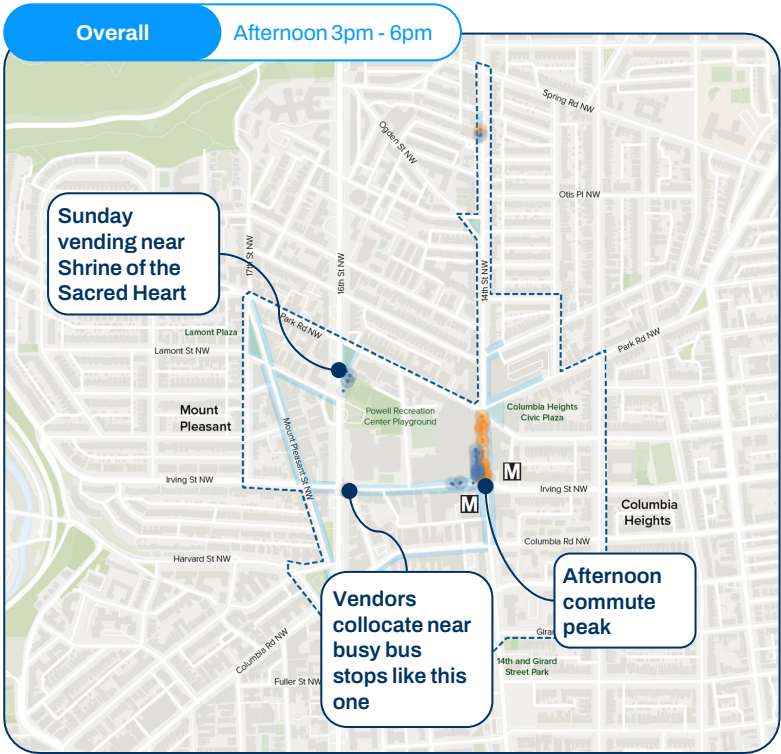
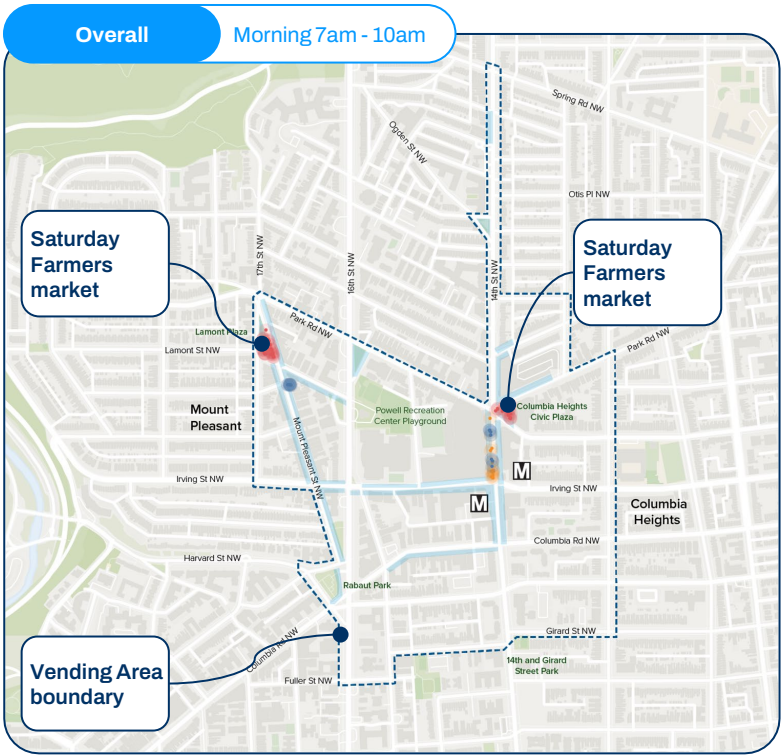
Finding #7

Farmers Markets and Vending Bring Activity

Across the study area, vendors were concentrated in strategic locations, often adjacent to Metro stations, bus stops, cultural institutions, and recreation centers.

Though the vending area covers a large portion of the two neighborhoods, vendors opt to cluster close to concentrations of public life, as foot traffic and visibility are key business drivers. This clustering, however, also increases congestion in these high-activity areas.

The presence and location of street vendors fluctuated over the course of the day and week. During our observations, Saturday saw a peak in vending activity at the farmers market, Sunday saw an uptick in activity at the Shrine Triangle Park at Park Road and 16th Street, and Tuesday saw vending distributed throughout the neighborhood at various high foot traffic locations.



- Legend**
- Vending Area
 - Dedicated Vending Zones
 - Vending Activity: Saturday
 - Vending Activity: Sunday
 - Vending Activity: Tuesday

Finding #7

Vending and Farmers Markets Bring Activity

Vendors contributed to congestion that creates an unpleasant pedestrian and cycling experience along busy corridors.

We observed the highest volumes of foot traffic at the intersection of 14th Street and Irving Street. Unsurprisingly, 14th Street is a highly desirable location for street vendors as it provides a consistent flow of pedestrians and ample visibility. While the presence of vending adds vibrancy to the otherwise blank facade of the DCUSA mall, it also creates congestion on the already busy sidewalk which can create mobility issues for wheelchair users and persons operating strollers.

Another popular vending location, especially on Sundays, was on Pine Street in between Shrine of the Sacred Heart and the Shrine Triangle Park. While vending brought an uptick in public life to this area, it also contributed to congestion on the sidewalk.

Competition for sidewalk space



Street vendors at 14th Street NW and Irving Street NW



Street vendors along 14th Street NW



Street vendors at 14th Street NW and Irving Street NW



Street vendors at 14th Street NW and Pine Street NW
Columbia Heights & Mount Pleasant 46

Finding #8

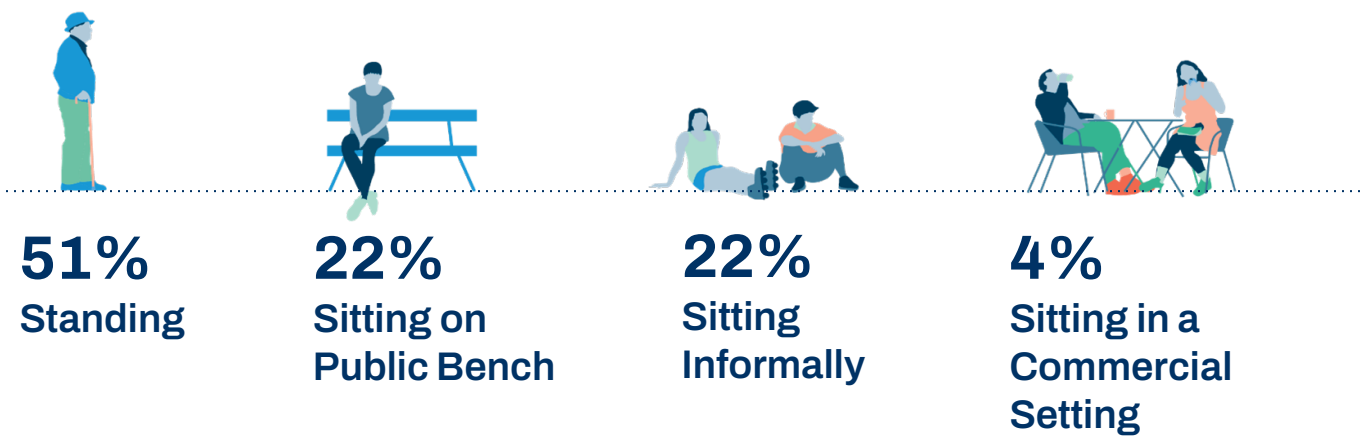
Sparse Seating

There is a general lack of comfortable public seating across the entire study area. Over half of those spending time were observed standing.

Of those observed sitting, only ¼ were in designated seating such as public benches or commercial seating, and nearly ¼ were observed sitting informally, meaning that they devised their own forms of seating using a curb or leaning against a wall. This is a clear sign that people spending time in the public realm were looking for places to sit, but were unable to find formal seating options where and when they needed it. Opportunities to spend time comfortably in public space, such as comfortable seating, makes for a more inviting public realm that fosters public life.

Overall Posture in the Study Area

Only 1/4 of people observed were sitting in designed seating.



People opt for informal seating under the shade of Dave’s Hot Chicken awning by leaning against the wall or window sill.



People stand on 14th Street with their food and beverages.



A group of kids enjoy cold drinks from Argyle Market but have nowhere to sit.

Finding #8

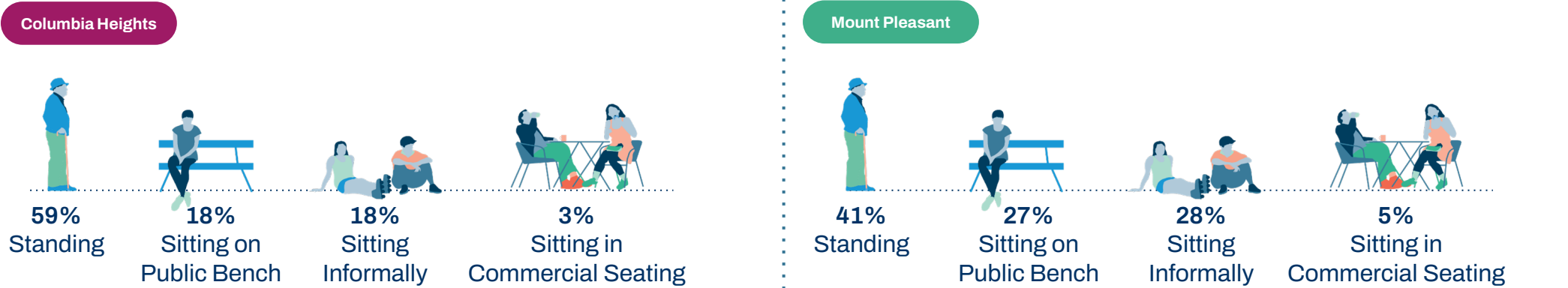
Sparse Seating

While the study area as a whole lacks comfortable public seating, the seating that is available is distributed unevenly across the two neighborhoods.

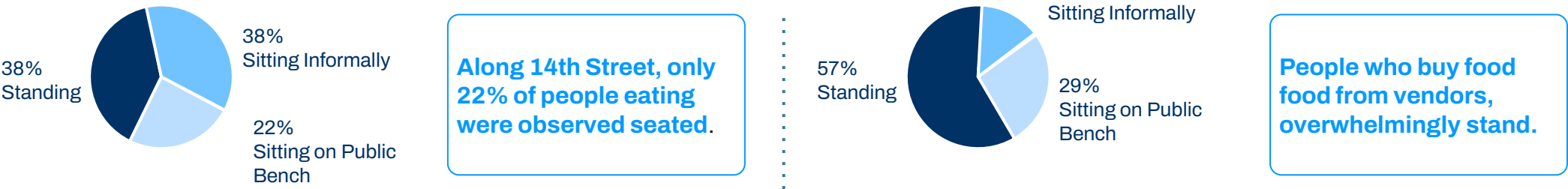
Based on the number of people observed standing and sitting in formal seating, public spaces in Mount Pleasant appear to offer more opportunities for sitting than public spaces in Columbia Heights. 41% of those observed spending time in Mount Pleasant were standing while 59% of those observed spending time in Columbia Heights were standing.

Our observations revealed a general lack of seating in many parts of the study area, limiting opportunities for people to sit while eating or drinking. In contrast, Mount Pleasant offered more plentiful seating adjacent to its eateries and restaurants, thereby encouraging people to spend time in the public realm while enjoying their food and beverages.

Overall Posture by Neighborhood



The study area lacks seating for eating and drinking



Finding #8

Sparse Seating

Throughout the study area, people got creative in order to get comfortable.

Just as the neighborhood parks and plazas offer limited desirable seating, the streets too lack places for people to sit and spend time comfortably. Throughout the study area, we saw people take matters into their own hands in finding places to sit and rest. Some brought their own foldable chairs, some used milk crates as a stool in the shade, some found relief on a grassy berm and some used Capital Bikeshare bikes as a temporary seat.

This type of ad hoc seating indicates a real need for additional comfortable seating throughout the study area. Available public seating often went unused as it was exposed to the elements, too far from where people wanted to be and therefore undesirable.

Places to Sit and Spend Time



Vendors brought their own seating.



Person used in-demand Capital Bikeshare bike as seating.



Person used a milk crate as seating in the shade.



Person found a shaded grassy curb to take a seat.

Finding #9

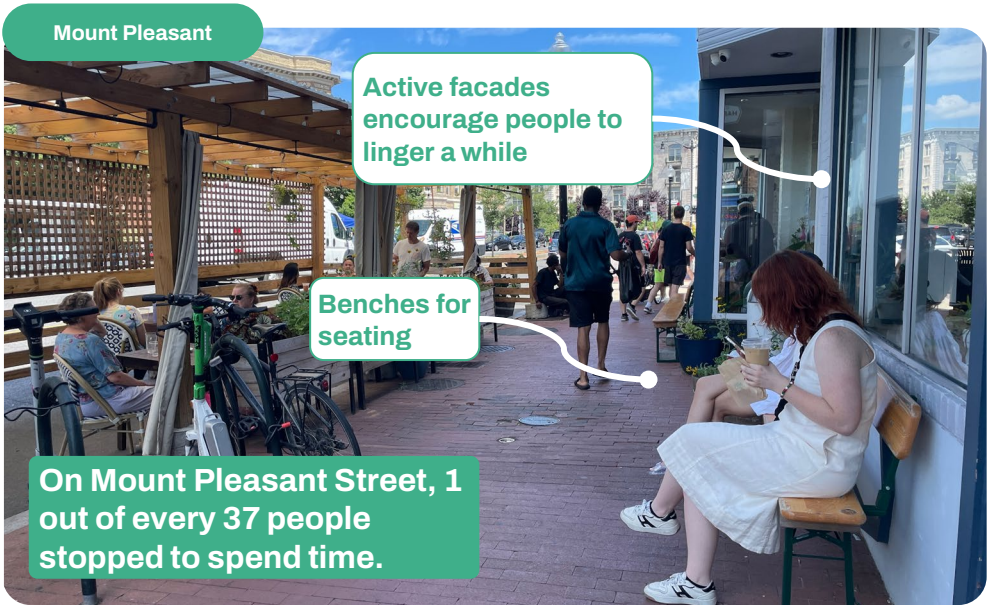
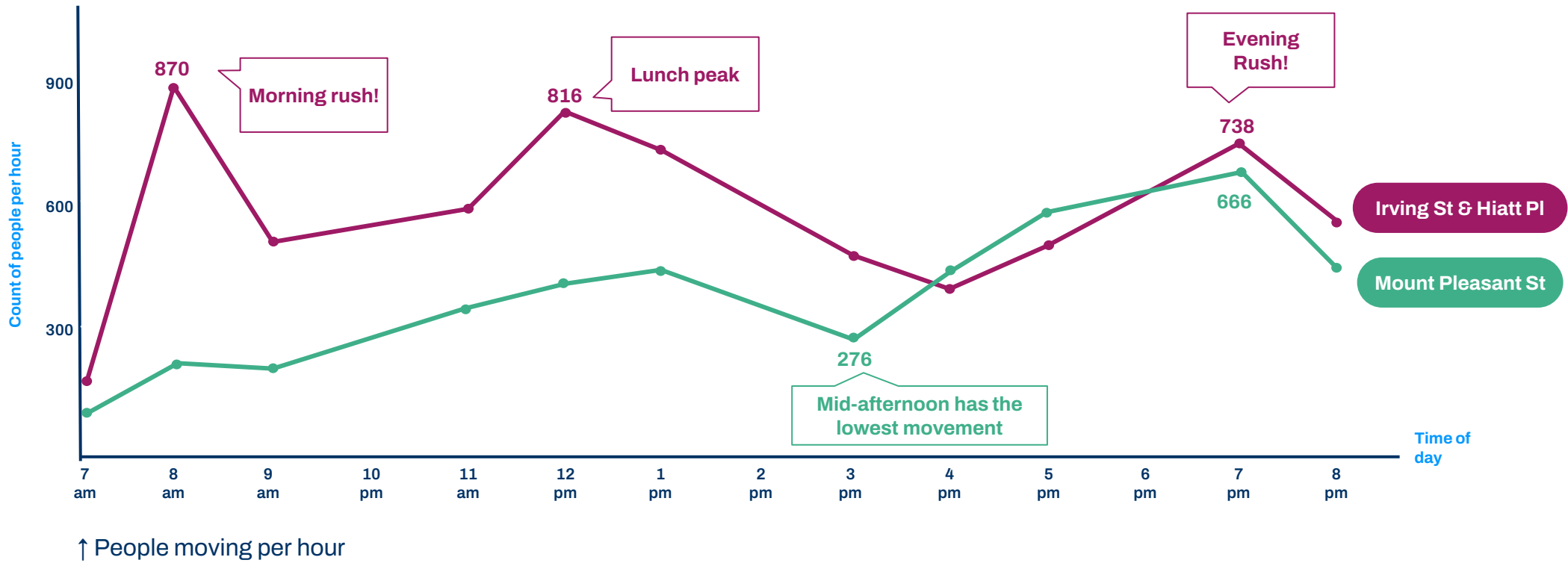
Streets with Potential

Great pedestrian streets need to have comfortable microclimates and active facades in order to entice people to stop and spend time.

Though parks and plazas in the neighborhoods entice people to stop and spend time, especially during events, not all of the area's streets are inviting for people to hang out. Mount Pleasant Street and Irving Street saw high volumes of foot traffic during observation but they are not sticky streets – many more people pass through than stop to spend time there.

On Irving Street, only 1 out of every 42 people who walked by stopped to spend time. Blank facades, limited seating, busy traffic, and noise pollution made for an unpleasant pedestrian experience. On Mount Pleasant Street, 1 out of every 37 people stopped to spend time, making it a stickier street with potential to be even stickier. Active facades, slower traffic, places to sit, and things to do made for a more pleasant pedestrian experience with invitations to stop and spend time.

Street Quality and Stickiness



Finding #10

Bus Stops as Community Anchors

Bus stops in Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant are important anchors.

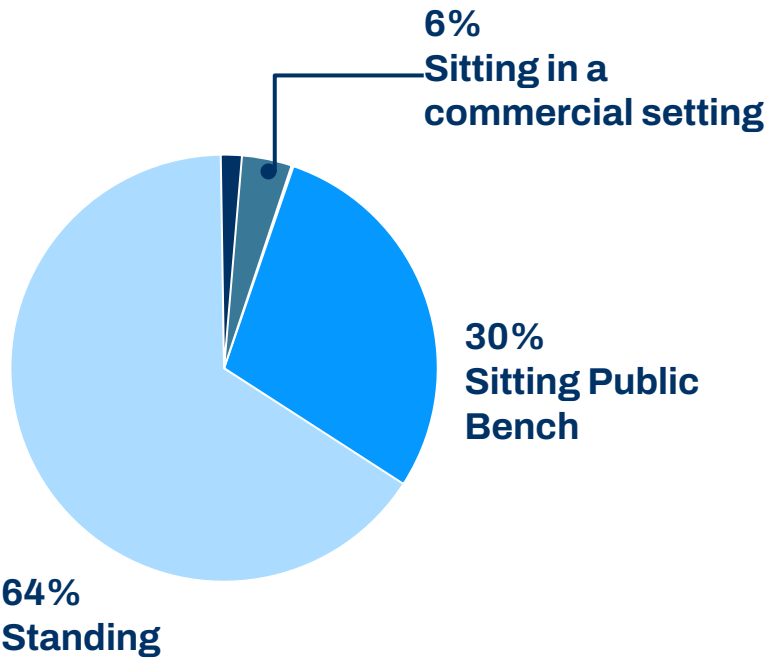
Waiting for public transit was the third most common activity observed among those spending time in the public realm. This indicates that people spending time in public space are doing so as part of a transit journey. This points to an opportunity to both further enhance the waiting experience and to provide other reasons for people to spend time in public space.

Despite bus stops being relied upon by the community, we observed gaps in the public infrastructure and amenities they provide. Many bus stops were not adequately shaded or equipped with sufficient seating.



Waiting for public transit was the third most common activity observed. Across the study area, 13% of those spending time were waiting for transit.

Nearly 2/3 of those waiting for public transit in the study area were standing.



2.2

Public Realm Findings

Public Realm Findings

Finding #1

Many public spaces are in need of upgrades.

Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant have many spacious public spaces but most are in need of maintenance and design upgrades — especially to improve cleanliness and accessibility.

- 1. Civic Plaza is a spacious public space, but lacks comfortable seating and shade where needed.
- 2. Metro Plaza provides a gracious spill out for the Metro entrance, but lacks regular maintenance and public amenities.
- 3. Sidewalks along 14th Street and Irving Street are amply wide, but lack shade, seating, and other amenities that could enhance public life.
- 4. Lamont Plaza is well loved, but needs repaired paving, shade and new seating.

Finding #2

Small businesses and streateries contribute to the unique character of the neighborhoods.

Small businesses, historical buildings, and public art enhance cultural character.

- 1. Small businesses offer unique experiences reflecting local culture.
- 2. Streateries provide spaces to enjoy outdoor meals and connect with the neighborhood.
- 3. Street vendors increase foot traffic and social interactions.

Finding #3

Inconsistent streetscapes create a disjointed experience for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles.

Busy streets lack consistent traffic strategies, accessibility, public amenities and tree canopy that would make for a more comfortable multimodal experience.

- 1. Varied intersections, fluctuating street widths, and uneven paving create an unpleasant pedestrian experience.
- 2. Limited protected bike lanes, sharrows on busy streets and the lack of bike lanes where needed create an inconsistent biking experience.
- 3. Vehicular traffic in the neighborhoods is often congested, adding a layer of stress to all modes of transit.

Finding #4

Vending is congesting foot traffic hot spots

Vending is creating sidewalk congestion, particularly near public transit

- 1. Vending along 14th Street can add to pinch points in the pedestrian flow during particularly busy periods.
- 2. Vending on Pine Street, between Shrine of the Sacred Heart and Shrine Triangle Park added to congestion on the sidewalk.

Ample Hardscape

Between its plazas, Metro stops, and ample sidewalks, Columbia Heights has plenty of public hardscape, but these spaces are not yet designed to help people make the most of them. Additionally, these hardscape areas can be better maintained.



Public space adjacent to Metro stop at 14th and Irving Streets



Columbia Heights Civic Plaza



Public space at 14th and Newton Streets



Wide sidewalks along 14th Street

Necessary Upgrades

Mount Pleasant is leafier and greener with many public parks and plazas, but some of these spaces could use repair and infrastructure updates to enhance accessibility and vibrancy. In particular, the paving and brickwork throughout the area need repair to ensure ADA compliance and accessibility for all.

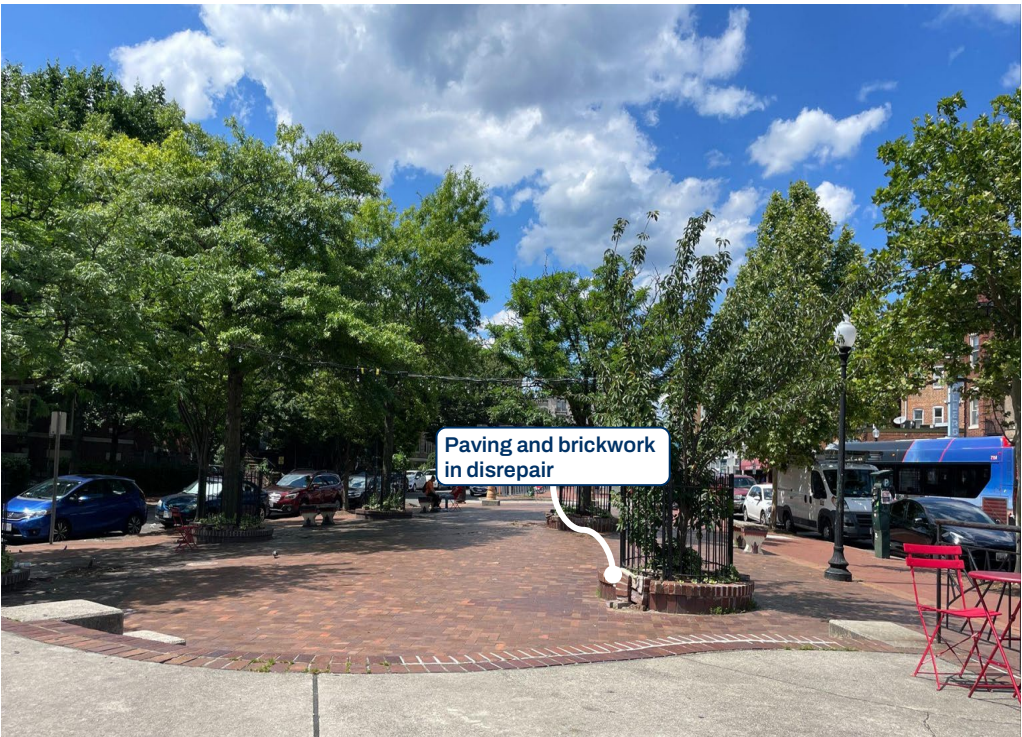
Along Mount Pleasant and 16th Streets, there are multiple NPS-owned spaces. These public spaces generally offer some greenery but are not programmed or amenitized for spending time.



Powell Recreation Center Playground



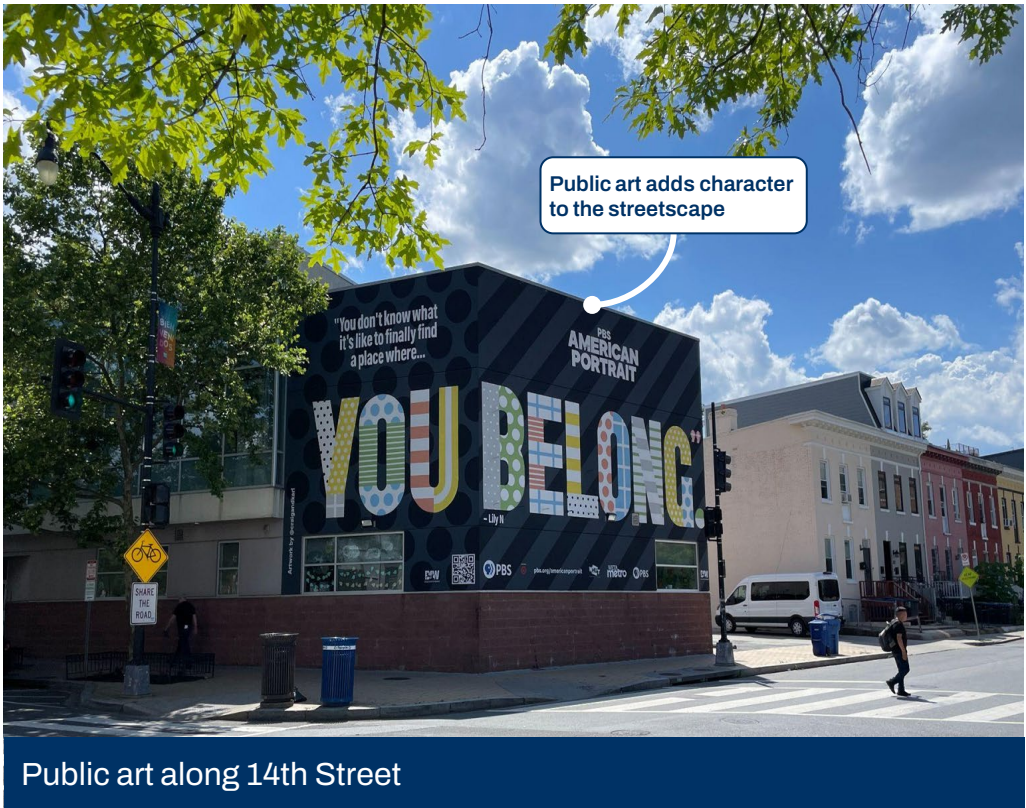
NPS site adjacent to Shrine of the Sacred Heart



Lamont Plaza

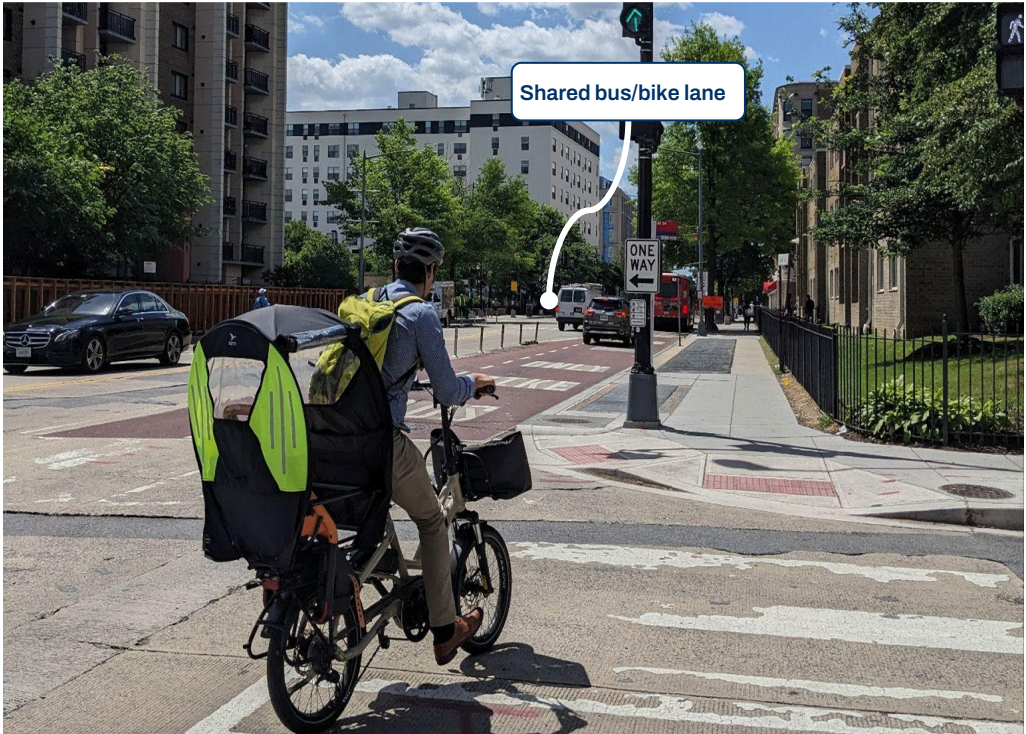
Unique Cultural Character

Throughout the two neighborhoods, storefront businesses, historic buildings, and public art contribute to a unique sense of cultural character. These are elements that ought to be further celebrated in the public realm.



Inconsistent Streetscapes

Multiple different streetscape designs are busy managing many modes of transportation. This presents an opportunity to implement a more comprehensive approach to multimodal street life.



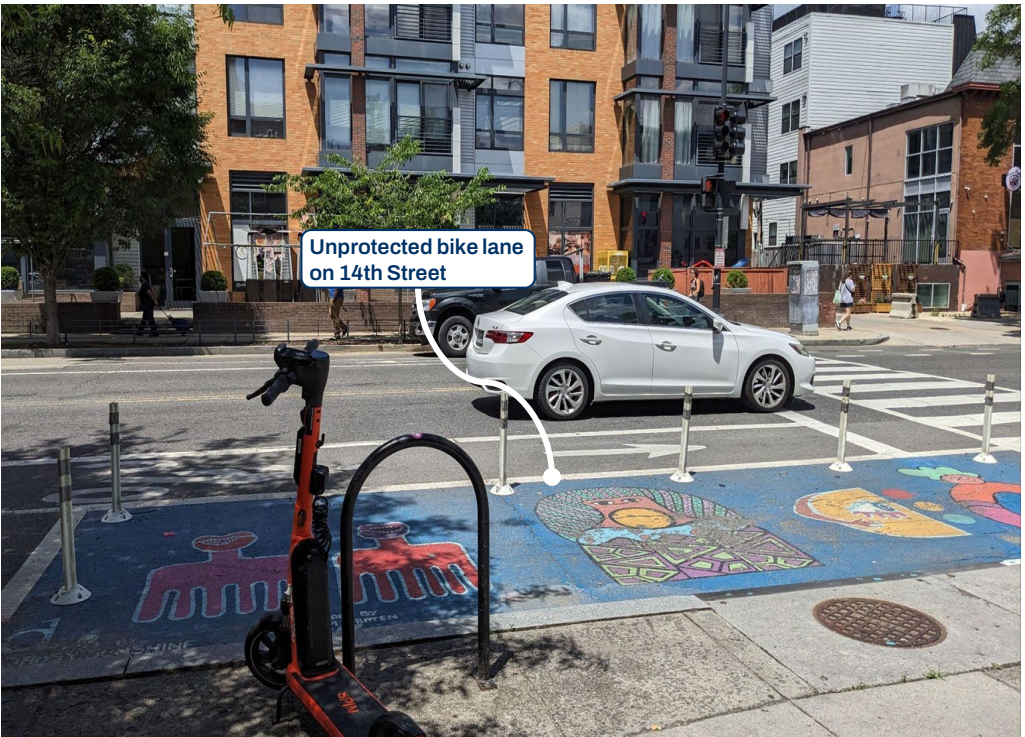
Intersection of 14th & Harvard Street



Intersection at Park Road & Mount Pleasant Street



Separated bike lane along 14th Street

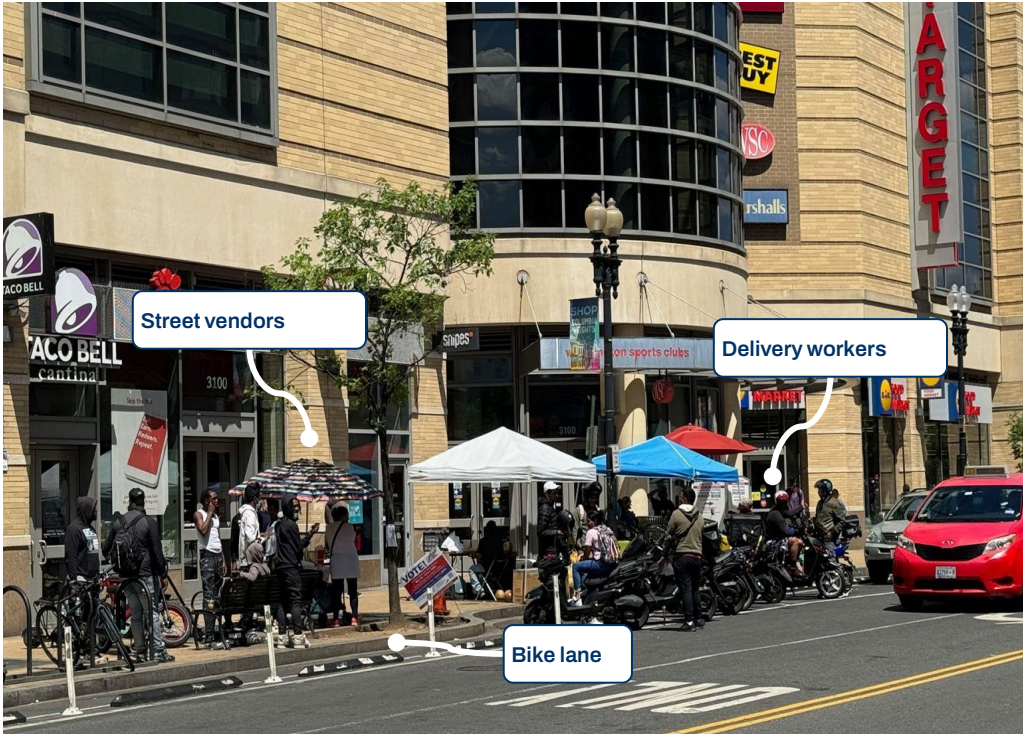


Extended public space along 14th Street between Newton & Meridian Streets

Vending Observations

Vending Shaping Congested Sidewalk

Vending thrives in high foot traffic areas, particularly near public transit, but this clustering often contributes to congestion. Enhancing the public realm to better manage circulation can support pedestrian accessibility.



Delivery workers along 14th Street, in front of DCUSA



Vending along 14th Street, in front of DCUSA



Vending along Irving Street, at intersection of Mt Pleasant & 16th Streets

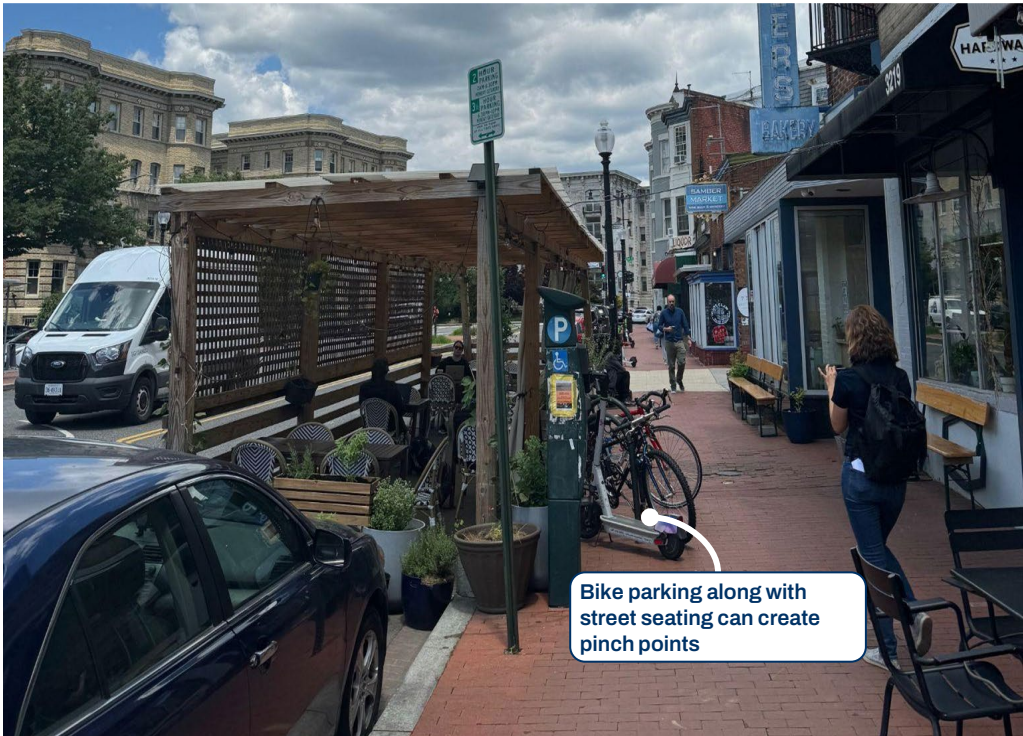


Vending along 14th Street, in front of DCUSA

Vending Observations

Vibrant Streateries

In Mount Pleasant, the everyday form of commerce in the public realm is outdoor dining in “streateries”. When in use, streateries enhance the vibrancy of the public realm.



Bike parking along with street seating can create pinch points

Streateries along Mount Pleasant Street



Bunting associated with streateries activates the public realm

Streateries along Mount Pleasant Street



Streateries along Mount Pleasant Street



Active facades enliven the public realm

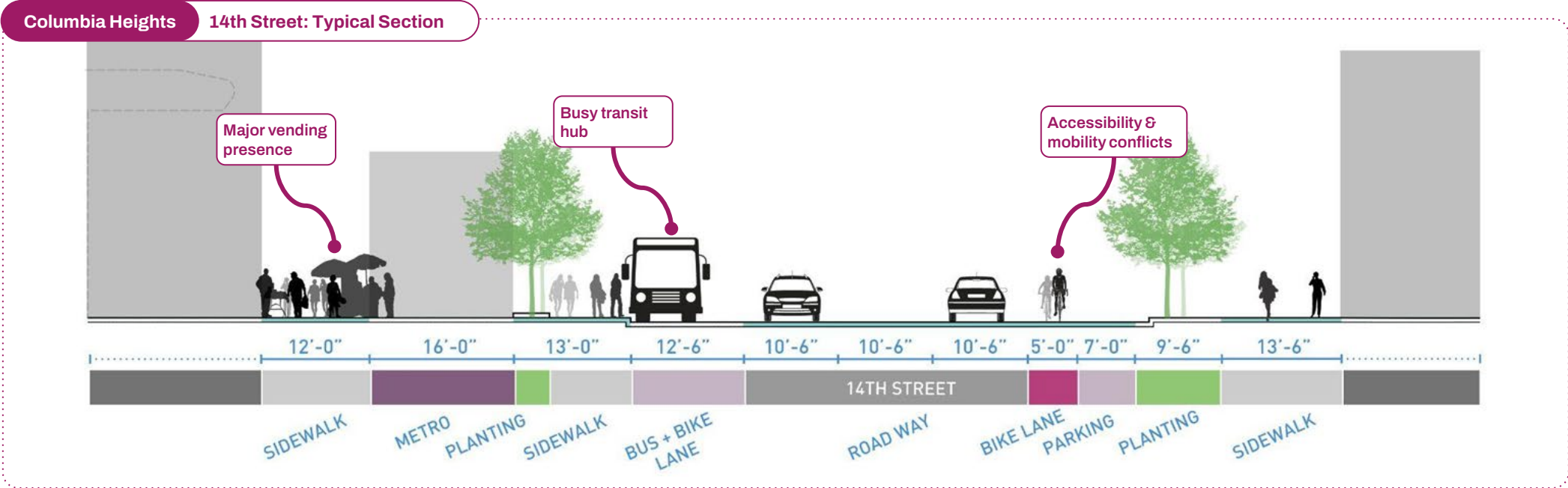
Streateries along Mount Pleasant Street

A Multimodal Street

14th Street is a busy thoroughfare with travel lanes, a bus lane, dedicated bike lanes and wide sidewalks. However, it does not always feel comfortable to be on as a cyclist or pedestrian.

Heavy foot traffic along the 14th Street corridor makes it a prime location for vending activity. Yet the clustering of vendors in these high-demand areas often exacerbates sidewalk congestion, limiting pedestrian flow even as it contributes to the corridor’s lively streetscape.

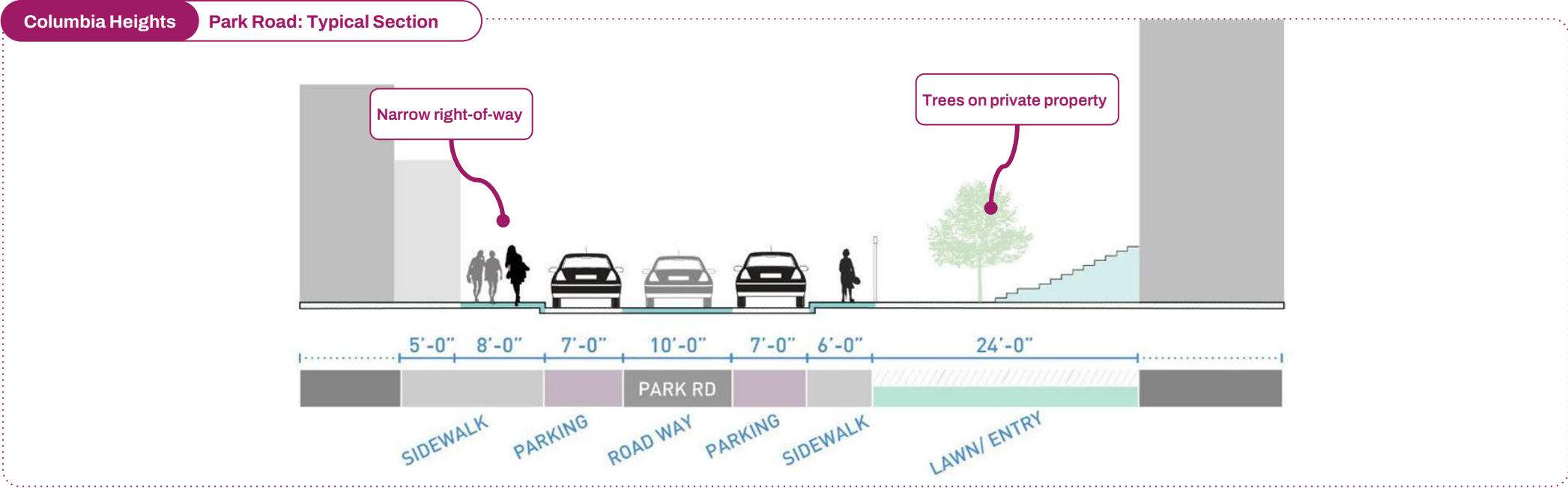
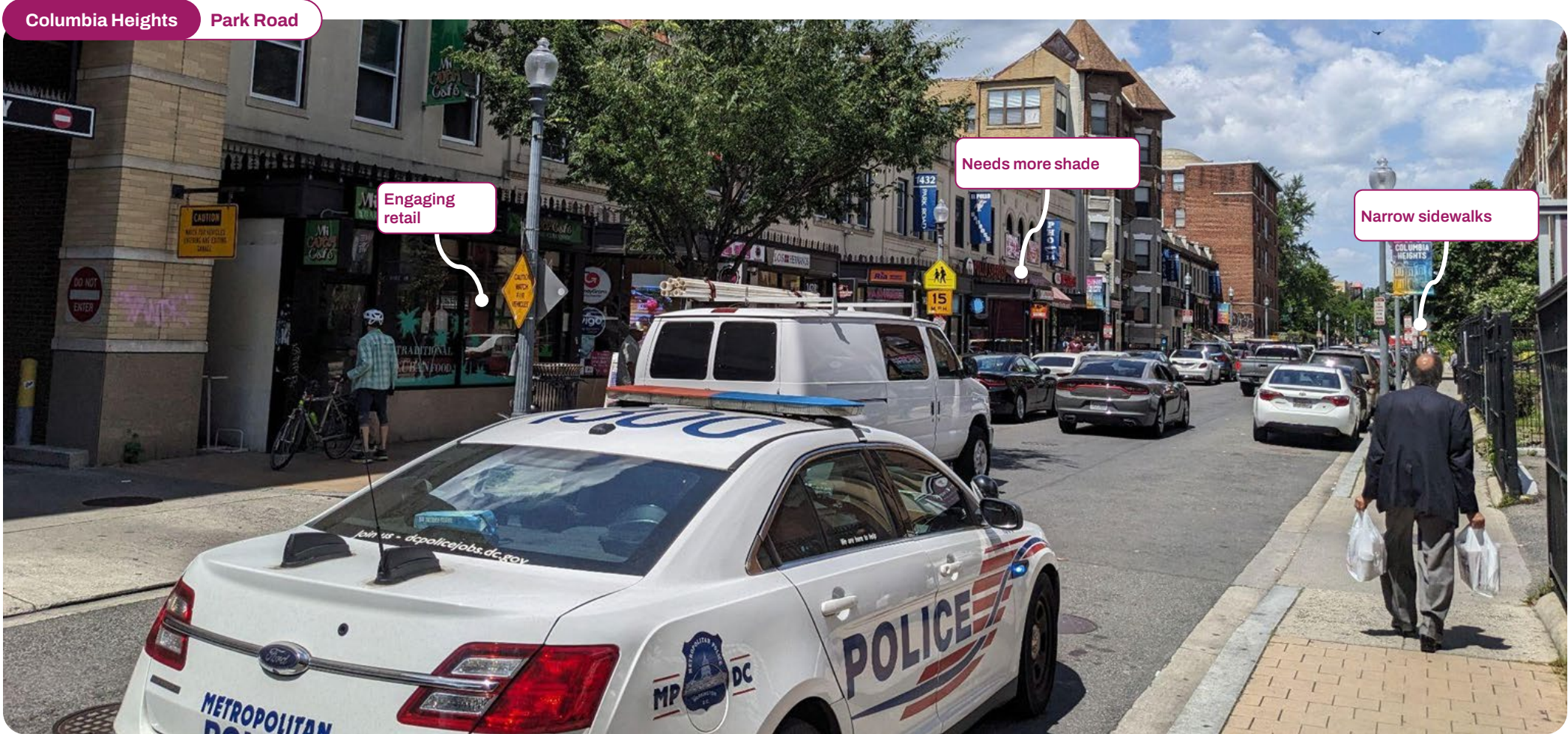
The bike lane, though separated in places from traffic, is often obstructed by illegally parked cars, mopeds, and even pedestrians seeking extra walking space. This makes for dangerous and unfavorable biking conditions.



Busy Streets That Need Pedestrian Improvement

Streets with significant vehicle traffic can feel less inviting for walking, gathering, and community use.

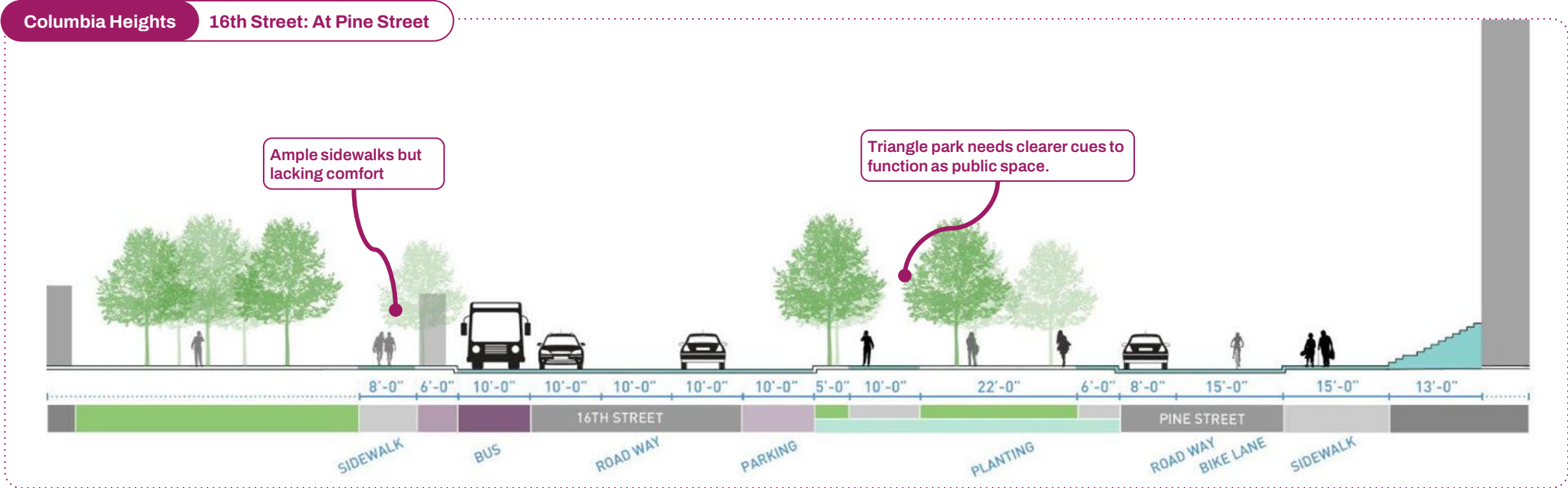
Key east-west connections like Park Road and Irving Street face challenges such as narrow sidewalks, limited shade, and traffic congestion. The stark end of Park Road in its current condition, forces pedestrians into Rock Creek Park on a busy street with less light. Enhancing these streets with wider sidewalks, additional greenery, and improved crossings can support a more balanced and accessible public realm.



A Fast-flowing Vehicular Corridor

Fast-moving traffic on 16th Street negatively impacts the pedestrian experience. Though allowed, biking on 16th Street is not encouraged by the public realm.

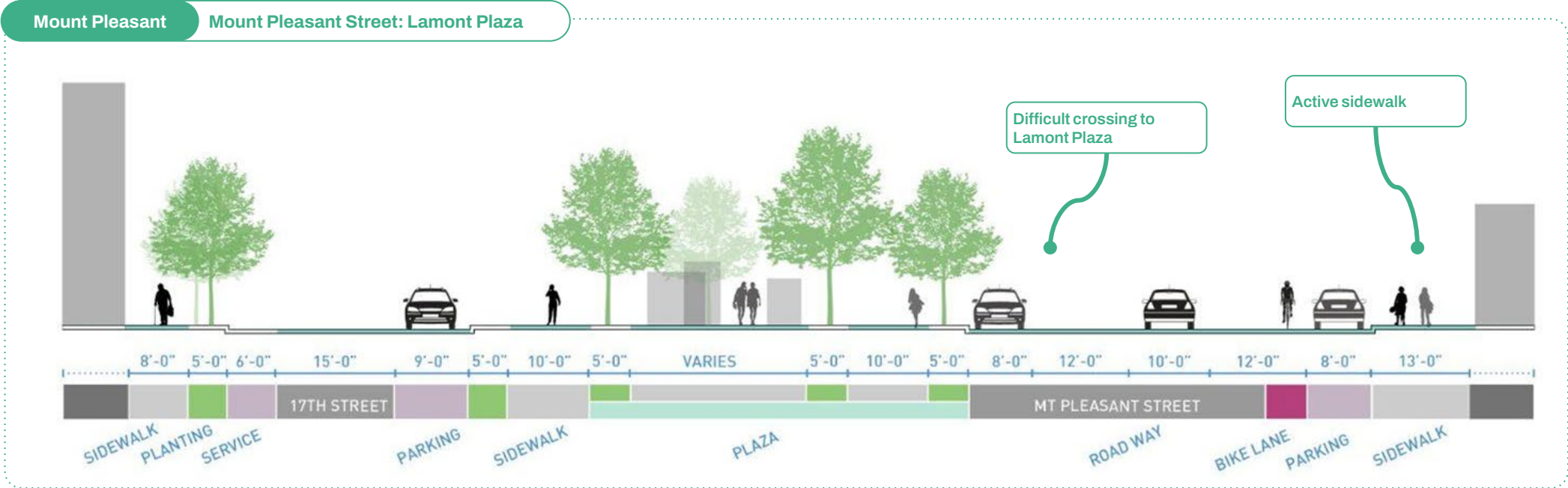
The existing street tree canopy is not sufficient to encourage comfortable walking. The trees do little to muffle traffic noise or provide shade on the sidewalk.



A Pedestrian Corridor

With its active facades, streateries and slower vehicular traffic, Mount Pleasant Street offers pedestrians and cyclists a more pleasant experience.

While the street is overall more walkable, connectivity between Lamont Plaza and sidewalks can be improved.



Insufficient Tree Canopy

Commercial corridors such as 14th Street lack tree canopy and shade, making them less inviting for sitting and gathering. East–west connections along Park Road and Irving Street similarly offer little canopy, creating a harsh pedestrian experience. While 16th Street is relatively green, its trees are set back from the sidewalk and provide limited shade where people walk and linger. The District’s goal of reaching 40% tree canopy by 2032 highlights the need for targeted planting, particularly in neighborhoods that are lacking urban street trees.



Distributed Public Park Jurisdiction

Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant are equipped with many public parks and plazas, but their ownership is distributed between the DC Department of Parks and Recreation and the National Park Service. This distributed ownership sometimes makes for a disjointed experience of the public realm as park quality and maintenance vary between public spaces.



3

Design Framework

3.1 Overview

3.2 Corridor Frameworks

3.1

Overview

Overview

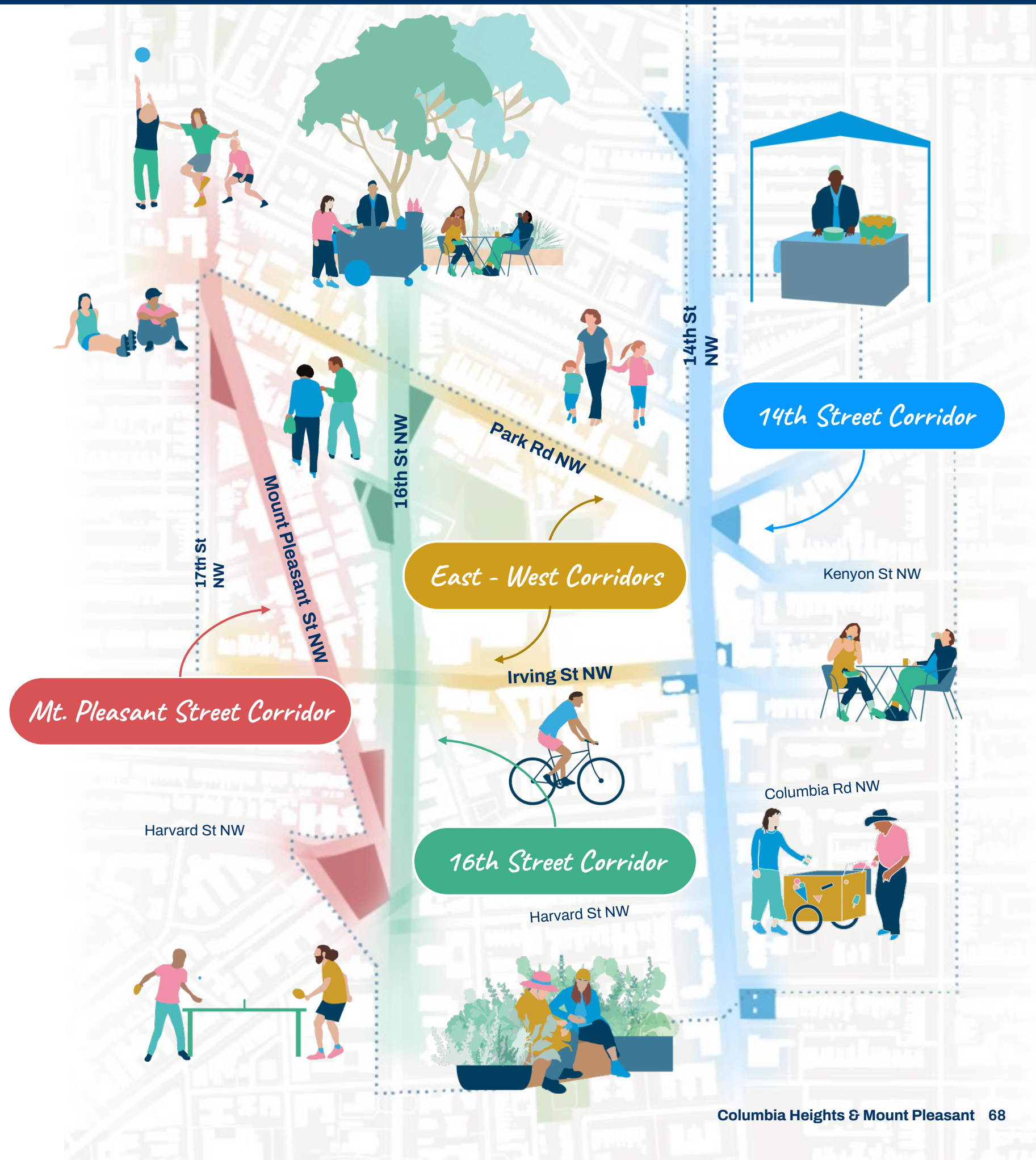
Recognizing that Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant are two distinct neighborhoods that share common needs, the design framework focuses on realistic enhancements to promote a vibrant, coherent public realm experience while maintaining neighborhood identity.

14th Street Corridor: a bustling urban thoroughfare centered on the Columbia Heights Metro and Civic Plaza, activated by commerce and events

16th Street Corridor: a spine connecting Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant with upgraded community anchors

Mount Pleasant Corridor: a green neighborhood main street with an active streatery culture and vibrant cultural programming

East-West Corridors: key mobility links between the Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant neighborhoods



Kit of Parts to enhance the public realm

Throughout both neighborhoods, a menu of strategies — or “kit of parts” — can be flexibly deployed to improve the social and environmental dimensions of the public realm.

This menu of strategies consists of both capital improvements and programmatic tools to enhance the everyday pedestrian experience of streets and public spaces. This kit of parts can be a reference and implemented by District government, businesses, or place management entities.

All strategies must comply with the District Department of Transportation’s (DDOT) *Public Realm Design Manual* and *Design and Engineering Manual*, which set the applicable standards and guidelines.



Curbside Lane

A dedicated zone that includes improvements for safe delivery, service, and loading, usually paired with vending or other commercial activity.



Seating

Movable or fixed furnishings in the streetscape, including benches, tables and chairs, and litter and recycling receptacles. Furnishings should be located in safe and comfortable areas, with shade wherever possible.



Planting

Trees in the streetscape, including canopy trees and understory trees. Trees provide shade, seasonal interest, stormwater benefits, native habitat, and streetscape character. Provide planting soil per the DDOT soil volume requirements and recommendations.



Bike Amenities

Dedicated, protected bike lanes and bike racks to increase safe and clear mobility throughout the study area.



Safe and Open Sightlines

Enhancing safety and intuitive wayfinding while increasing visual connectivity between spaces by providing appropriate planting and trimming trees to provide clear sightlines.



Clear, Accessible Entrances

Organizing the space to provide a clear and intuitive entrance to the public park or plaza, including paving materials, seating, and planting.



Site specific strategy

Site with specific uses or spatial conditions have proposed strategies that are unique to their individual area.



Enhanced Crossings

Pavement markings, streetscape materials, and signalization that prioritizes pedestrian safety and comfort at particular intersections. Provide raised table crosswalks.



Temporary Street Closure

Restricting vehicular traffic to prioritize the pedestrian experience and expand the zone for public programming and events. Streets can be closed for pop-up events, particular days of the week, seasonally, or as a pilot for a longer-term closure.



Enhanced Bus Stop

Bus stops that are treated like small-scale pocket parks and include public amenities, such as bus shelters, seating and other furnishings, and shade.



Lively Edges

Providing elements with opportunities for seating, leaning, gathering, or other flexible options to occupy spaces framing a more central area.



Lighting

Enhancing public life and pedestrian. Lighting can be used to define outdoor amenity spaces and gathering areas.

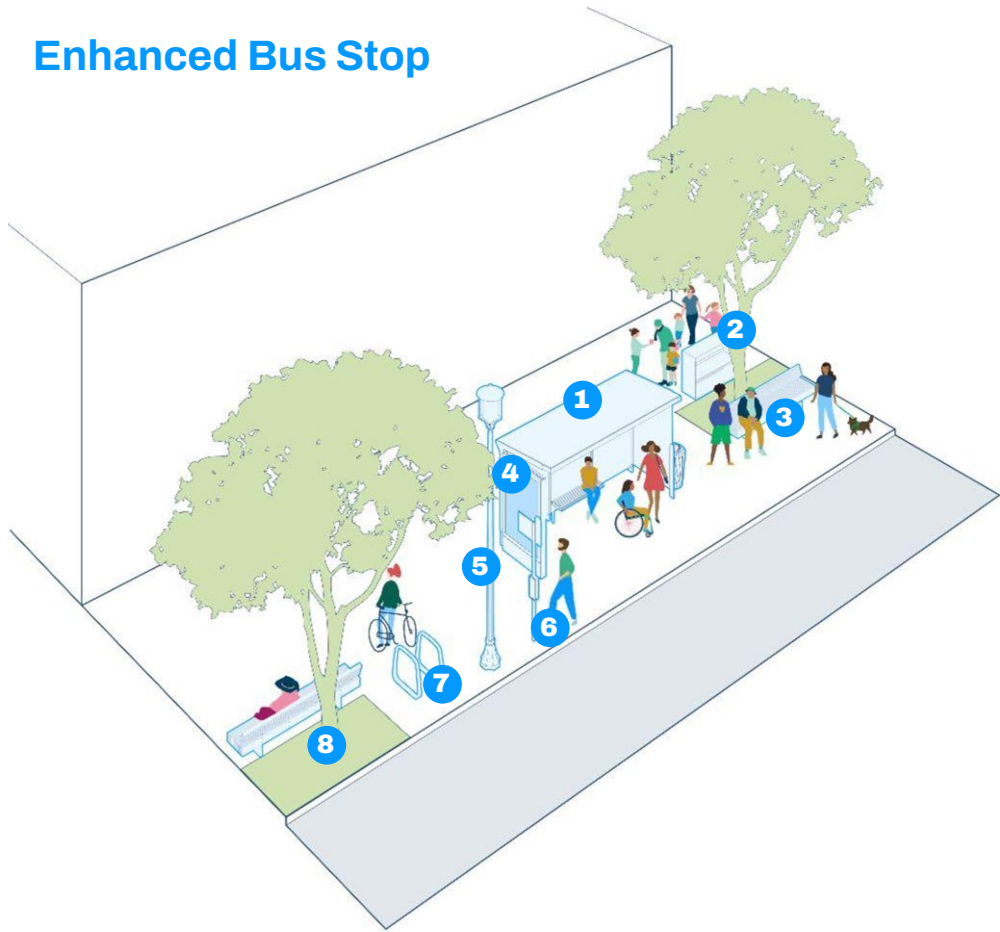


Central Gathering

Providing a centralized space in parks to focus program, gathering, and sightlines. Can include special events and other programming to enhance and enliven the public life experience. Consider seasonal, regular, ongoing, and pop-up opportunities.

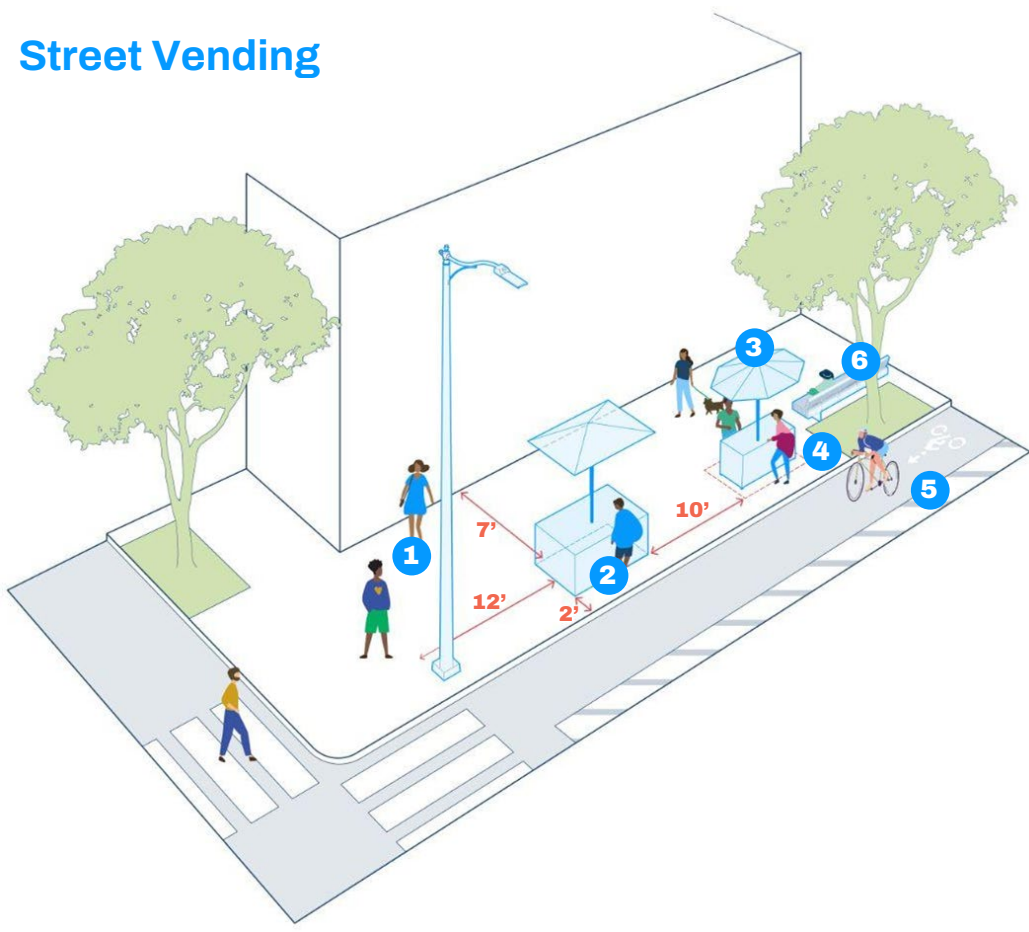
Kit of Parts for social design

Enhanced Bus Stop



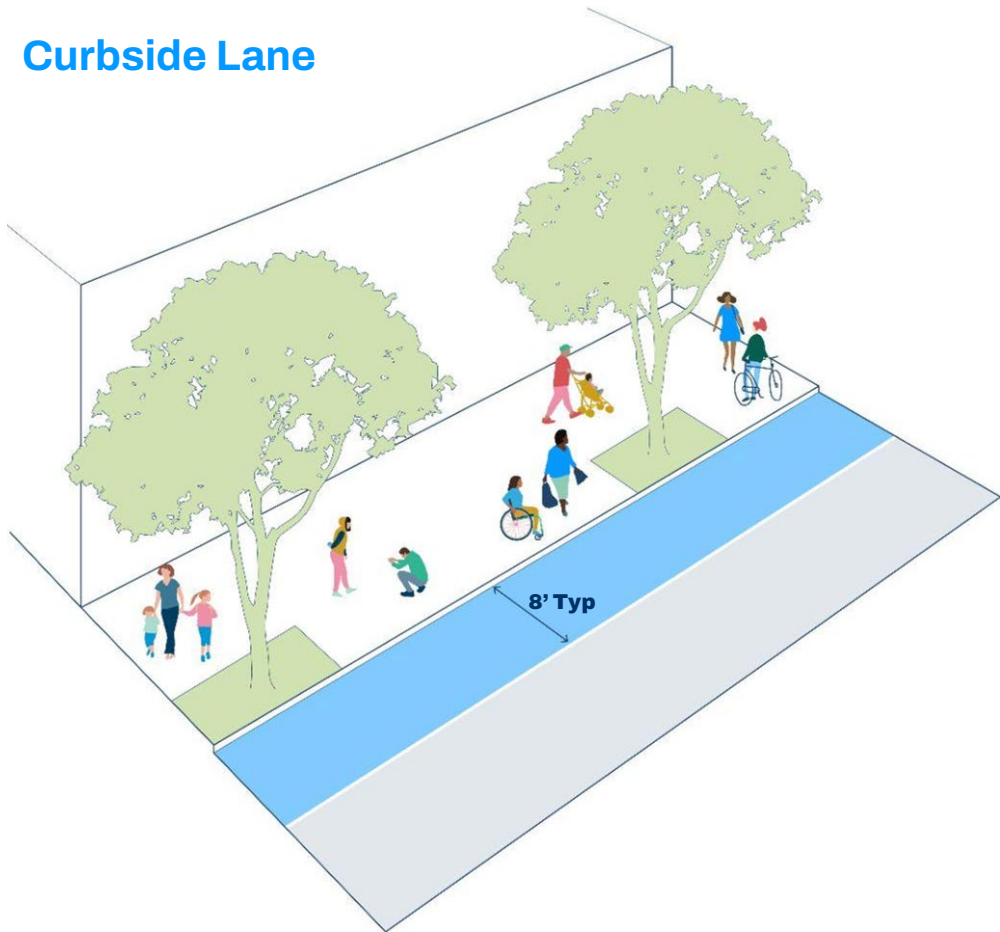
- 1 Bus shelter with integrated seating
- 2 Community shared resource, such as a pantry or little free library
- 3 Shaded seating adjacent to bus stop
- 4 Opportunity for community information or local art
- 5 Lighting
- 6 Wayfinding and transit information
- 7 Bike infrastructure
- 8 Street tree planting - select species that are appropriate urban conditions and that provide ample shade.

Street Vending



- 1 Ensure adequate clearance for pedestrian accessibility:
 - a. Provide 7 ft. for two-way accessible circulation at sidewalks
 - b. Allow 10 ft. minimum clearance between vendors
 - c. Provide 12 ft. clearance from intersections and crosswalks
 - d. Ensure vending booth is 2 ft. minimum from curb
- 2 Vendor booth - skirt or table cloth is an opportunity for branding and marketing, as well as local art and identity
- 3 Vendor booth - canopy for shade and weather protection
- 4 Ensure adequate clearance for protection of street tree critical root zone to avoid compaction of planting soils
- 5 Maintain clear bike lane for safe travel

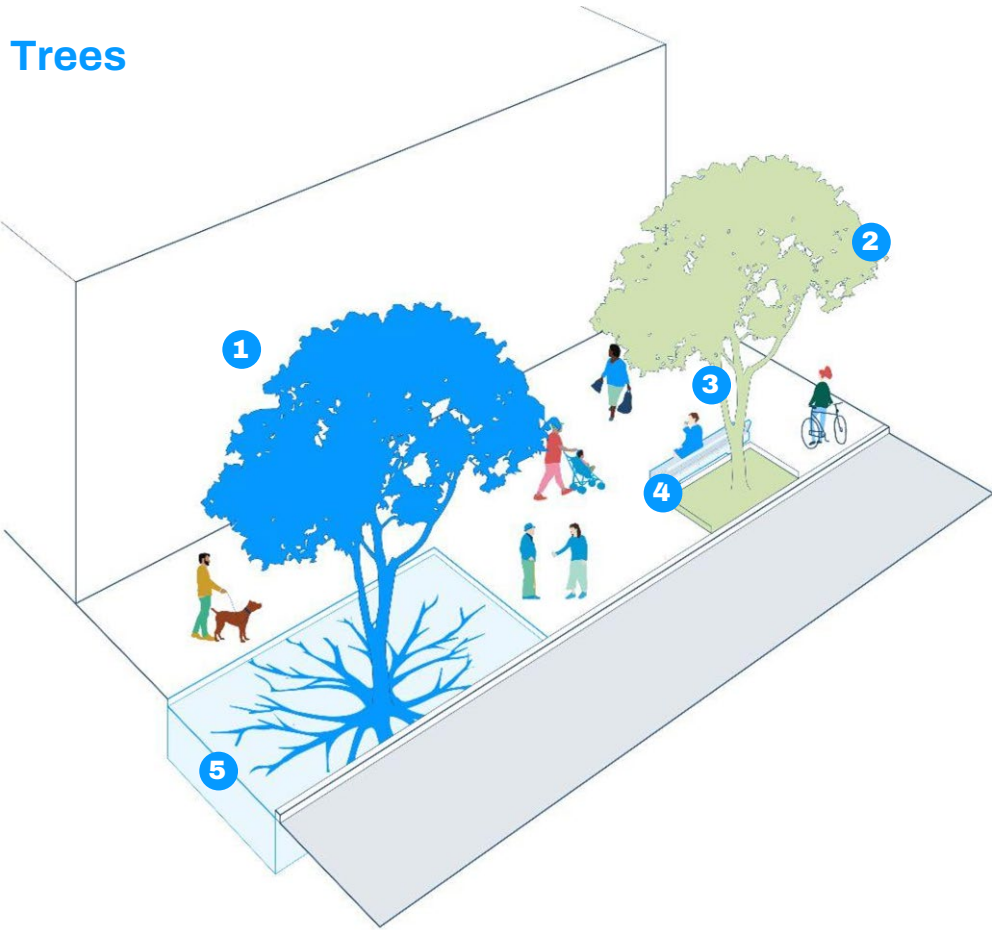
Curbside Lane



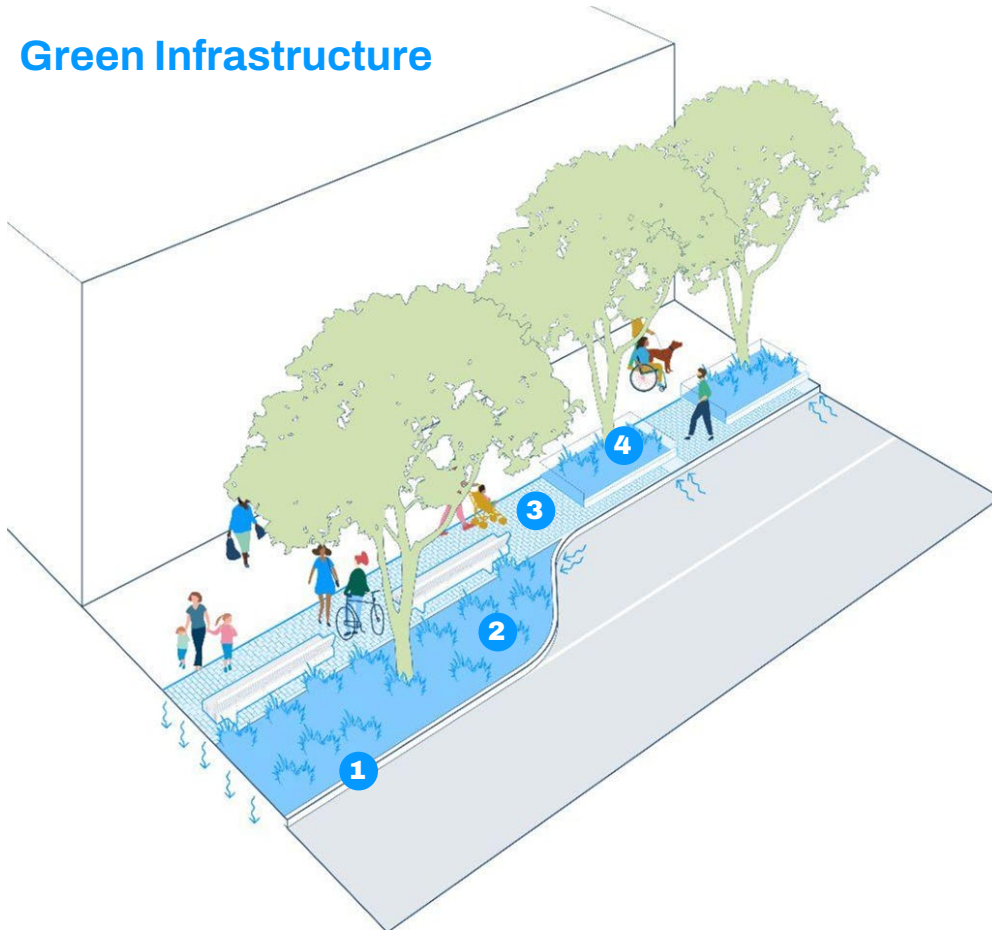
- 1 The curbside lane may be programmed for a variety of uses depending on adjacent context, such as loading, parking, bus loading (queuing and staging zone), green stormwater infrastructure curb bump-outs, Capital Bikeshare stations, planters, pocket parks, streateries, vending, or vending storage.

Kit of Parts for environmental design

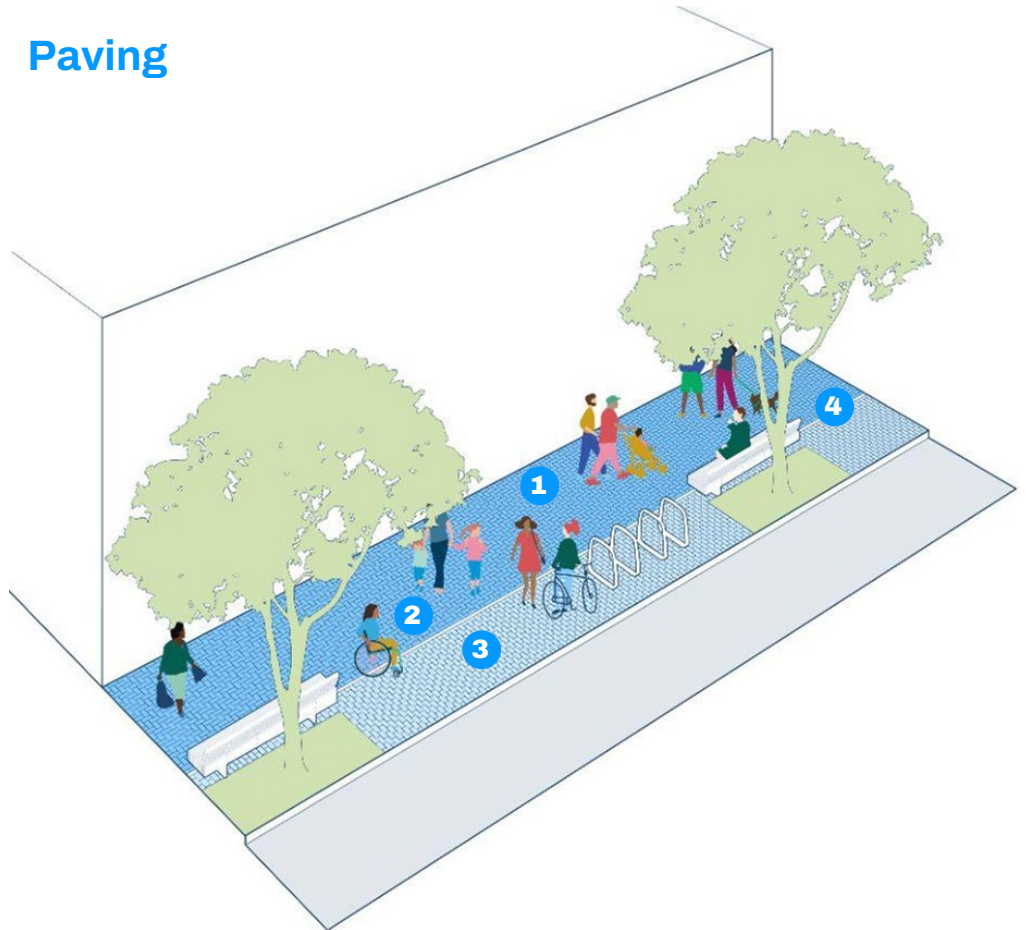
Trees



Green Infrastructure



Paving



- 1 Increased urban tree canopy is a priority for all streetscapes. Trees provide shade and lessen urban heat island impact through evapotranspiration, as well as reducing stormwater runoff. Additionally, trees soften the impervious character of urban streets, provide a buffer to vehicular traffic, and enhance the character of neighborhoods.
- 2 Tree species considerations:
 - a. Prioritize species with arching form for shade
 - b. Select species from southern hardiness zones for future climate adaptability
 - c. Select diversity of native and adaptive species
- 3 Limb trees for visibility and safety
- 4 Locate seating in areas of shade
- 5 Provide appropriate soil volume for selected tree. Provide sand based structural soils to reduce risk of compaction and provide additional stormwater runoff storage volume. Consider use of innovative materials to reduce carbon footprint, such as recycled glass and biochar.

- 1 Curb bump-out to provide area for bioretention
- 2 Specify native plants that are appropriate for stormwater management and harsh urban conditions, such as prolonged dry conditions, compacted soils, tolerance to salt, and periodic inundation
- 3 Incorporate areas of permeable paving to reduce stormwater runoff
- 4 Streetscape bioretention planter

- 1 Durable paving that is standard and readily available
- 2 Specify paving that is safe, accessible, and maintainable, and that provides appropriate surface abrasion testing and slip resistance
- 3 Distinguish neighborhood character through paving selection to enhance identity (e.g., concrete unit pavers in Columbia Heights and brick paving in Mount Pleasant). Distinguish sidewalk zones through paving selection.
- 4 Consider permeable paving in areas of low foot traffic wherever possible and suitable for uses. Permeable paving reduces impervious surfaces and lessens stormwater runoff.
- 5 Provide ongoing maintenance and stewardship

3.2

Corridor Frameworks

14th Street Corridor

A bustling urban thoroughfare centered on the Columbia Heights Metro and Civic Plaza

The 14th Street corridor is a key north–south route in the District, accommodating multiple modes of travel including buses, bikes, and cars. It is an active streetscape for Columbia Heights and supports commercial activity between the Columbia Heights Metro Station and Civic Plaza.

However, the corridor faces significant challenges, with DDOT’s Bus Priority Project’s analysis showing that two-thirds of traffic injuries between Irving and Newton Streets involve pedestrians and cyclists, often linked to U-turns and pick-up/drop-off activities. Heavy traffic congestion between Irving and Park Streets also leads to severe bus delays, disrupting transit efficiency and mobility. As a central hub for commercial activity and public life, the 14th Street corridor has the potential to boost commerce while improving safety and accessibility for all users. Addressing these issues will strengthen its role as a vibrant, inclusive space that reflects Columbia Heights’ unique identity and cultural expression.

Character Zones

North 14th Street

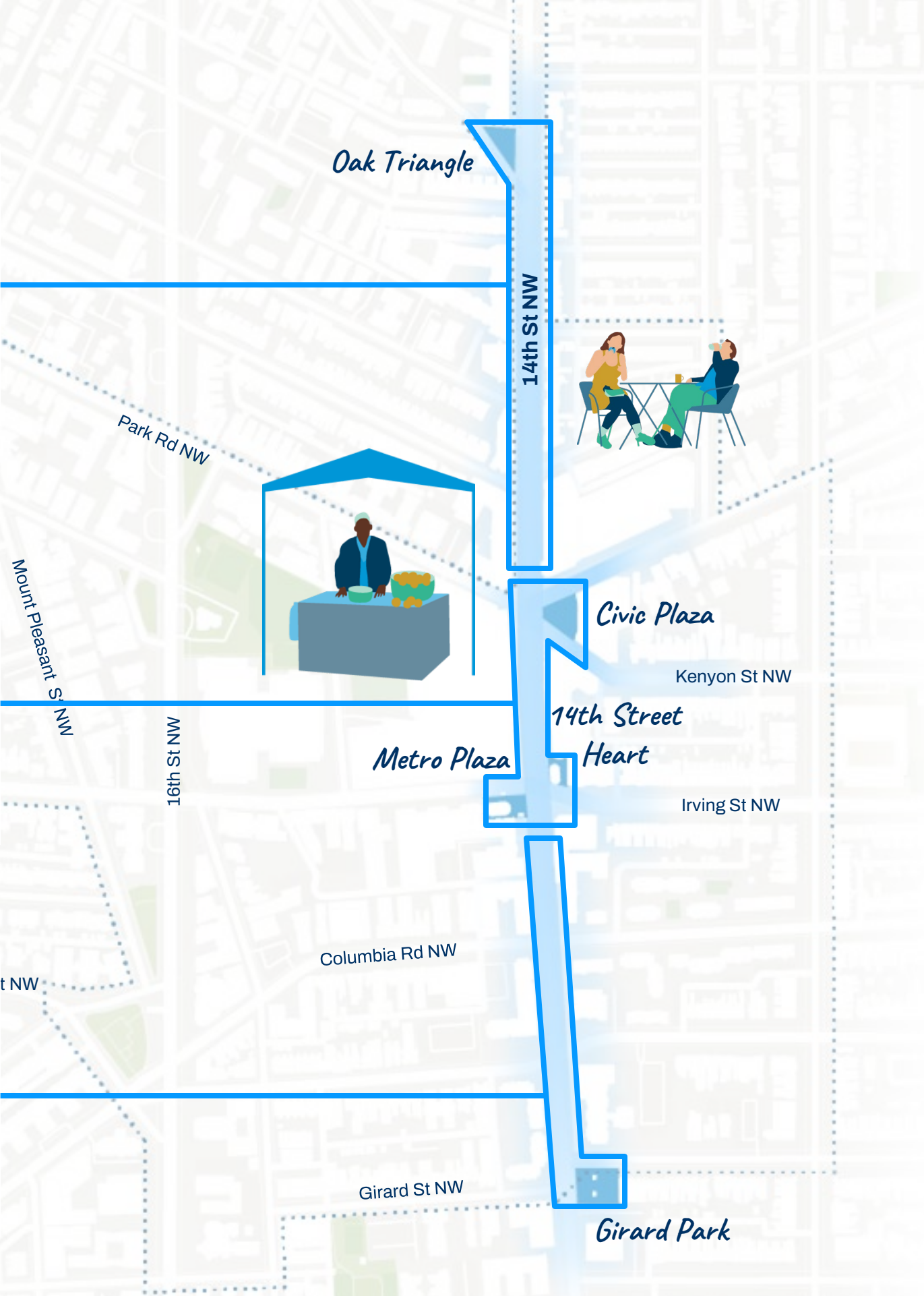
Characterized by wider sidewalks, historic landmarks, and businesses, this stretch of 14th St can be energized with more active curbside lanes.

Commercial Heart

A high energy gathering place for transit, storefront retail, and vending.

South 14th Street

With fewer ground floor storefronts, this section is more residential. The opportunity here is to add more spaces where pedestrians can pause or rest.



14th Street
Context

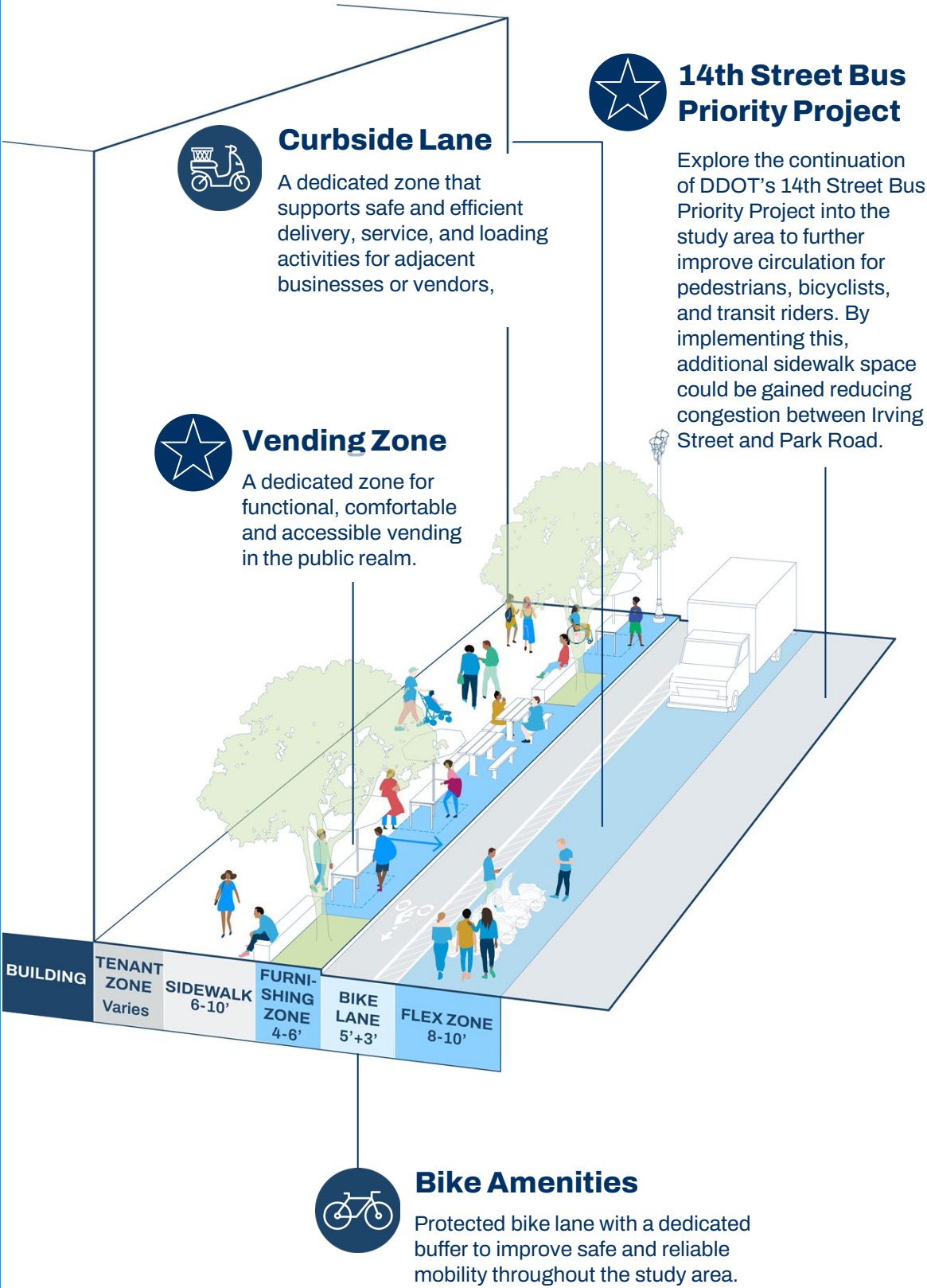


14th Street

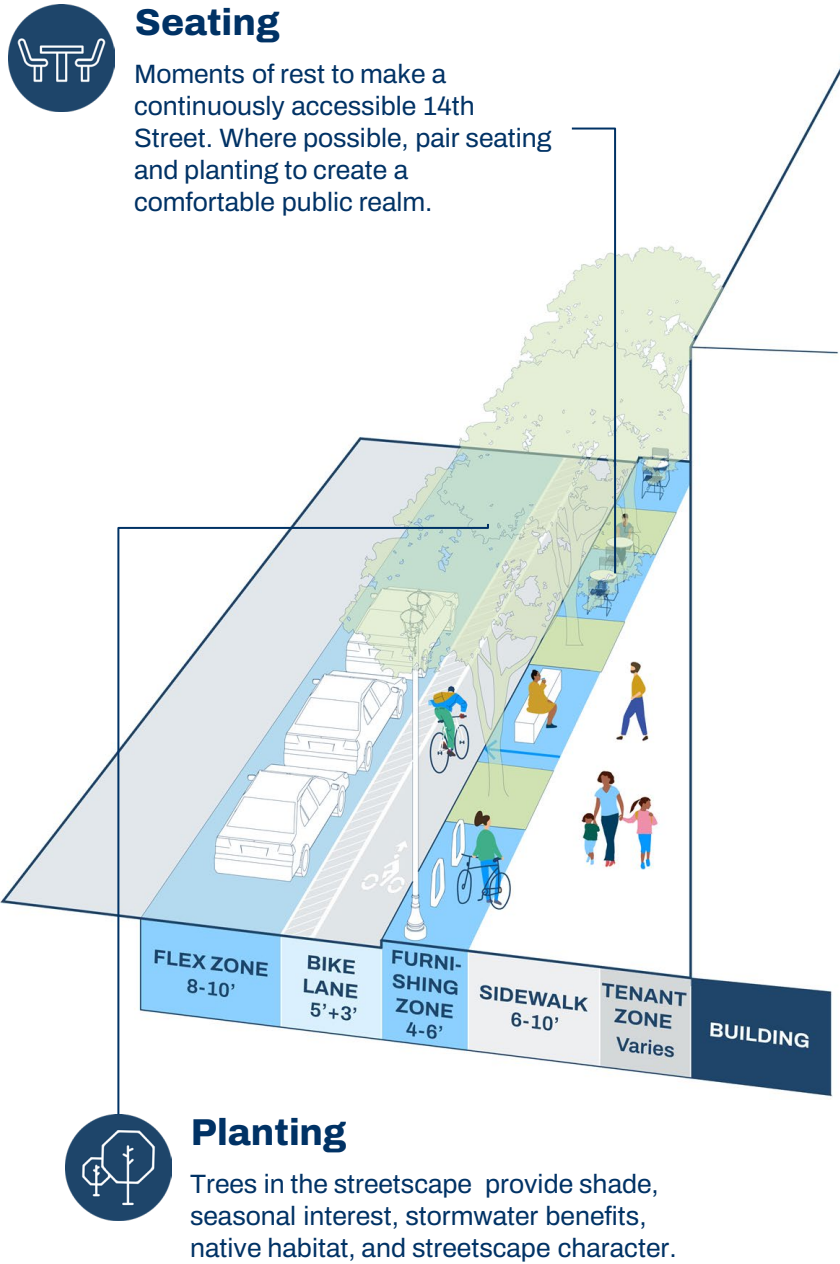
An active pedestrian-, transit-, and bike-oriented street that offers a string of comfortable rest areas

Leveraging bus and bike connectivity to the north of the study area, the 14th Street corridor continues the proposed configuration of continuous and protected bike lanes on both sides of 14th Street between Oak Triangle and Girard Park. Moments for resting and gathering are provided with enhanced bus stops or public curbside lanes that are placed every few blocks, enhancing walkability and the pedestrian experience.

Streetscape with Vending Activity



Streetscape with Seating



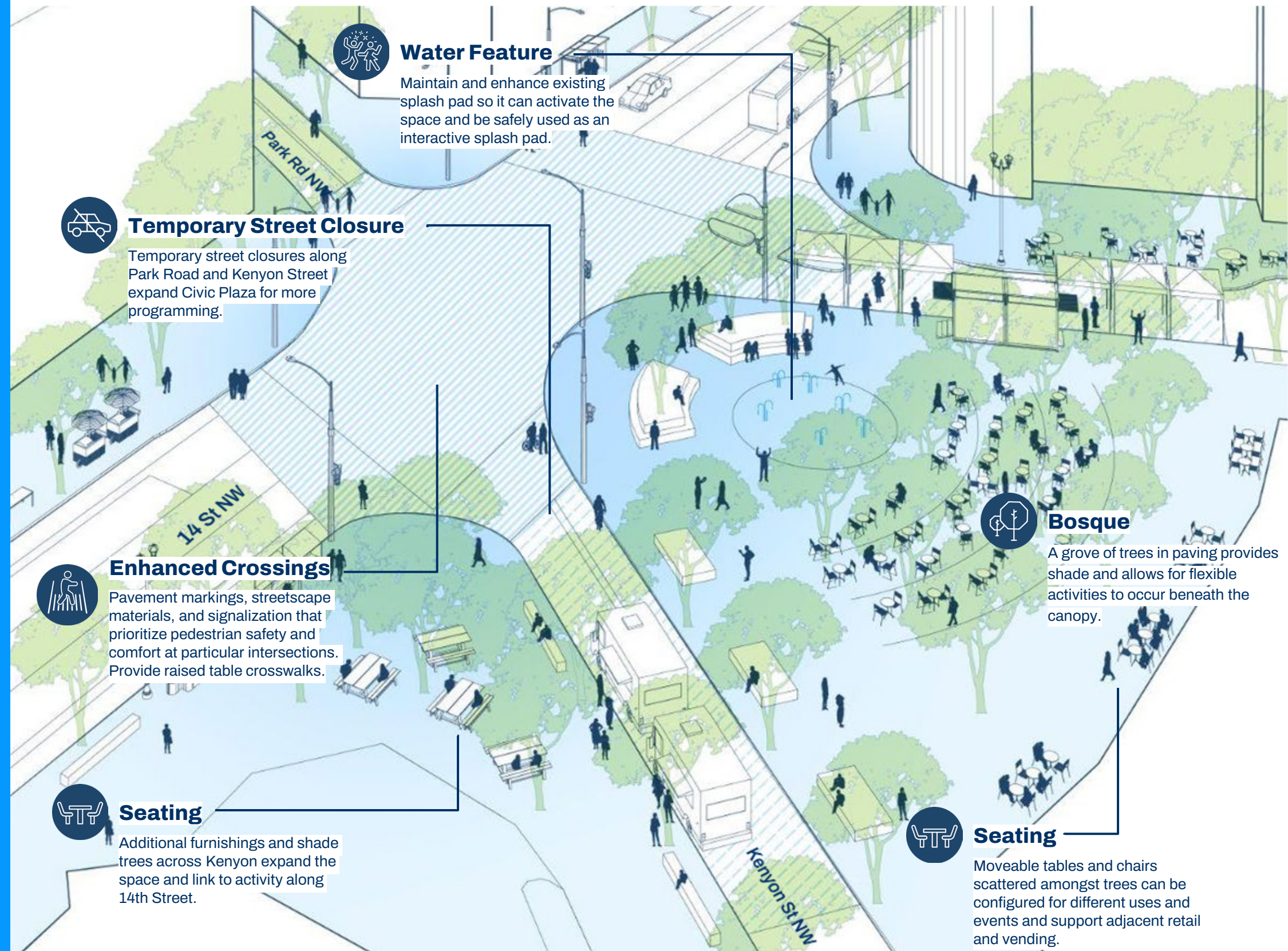


Civic Plaza

Civic Plaza 2.0: A platform for cultural expression, commerce, and everyday comfort in the public realm

Civic Plaza is the heart of Columbia Heights, but today it is in need of repair and enhancement to truly make it a great platform for community gathering. A more flexible open space allows for various programming that can support and reflect community identity as well as a thriving commercial culture. Safe and inviting public amenities, such as seating with appropriately located shade, support vibrant public life. The existing splash pad fountain, when repaired and consistently maintained, has the potential to activate the space for a variety of people and is an important asset to the neighborhood.

Temporary street closures along Park Road and Kenyon Street prioritize the pedestrian experience and provide flexibility to expand programming and gathering opportunities. The weekly farmer's market is a model of successful pop-up programming that can be enhanced through street closures.





Metro Plaza

A vibrant, multi-purpose community space that better balances commercial activity, mobility, and gathering

The presence of the WMATA Columbia Heights Metro stop is a significant landmark and anchor to the intersection of 14th Street and Irving Street, and an opportunity to reflect the identity of the neighborhood. Leveraging the existing Metro architecture provides opportunities to integrate vending, shade, public art, interpretive or informational signage, and shelter.

The 4-way “scramble” intersection is a unique crossing in the District. Pedestrian safety and intuitive wayfinding is paramount to the experience of this place of movement and exchange. Enhancing this intersection with material treatment and signalization that prioritizes the pedestrian can position the entirety of the public space at Metro Plaza as one vibrant, urban hub.



Seating

Movable or fixed furnishings in the streetscape, including benches, tables and chairs, and litter and recycling receptacles. Furnishings should be located in safe and comfortable areas, with shade wherever possible.



Bump Outs

Bump outs provide more sidewalk for public amenities, narrow the distance for pedestrians to cross 14th Street, and allow for safe and comfortable circulation.



Social Services

Information and resources for people associated with the existing WMATA metro station structure



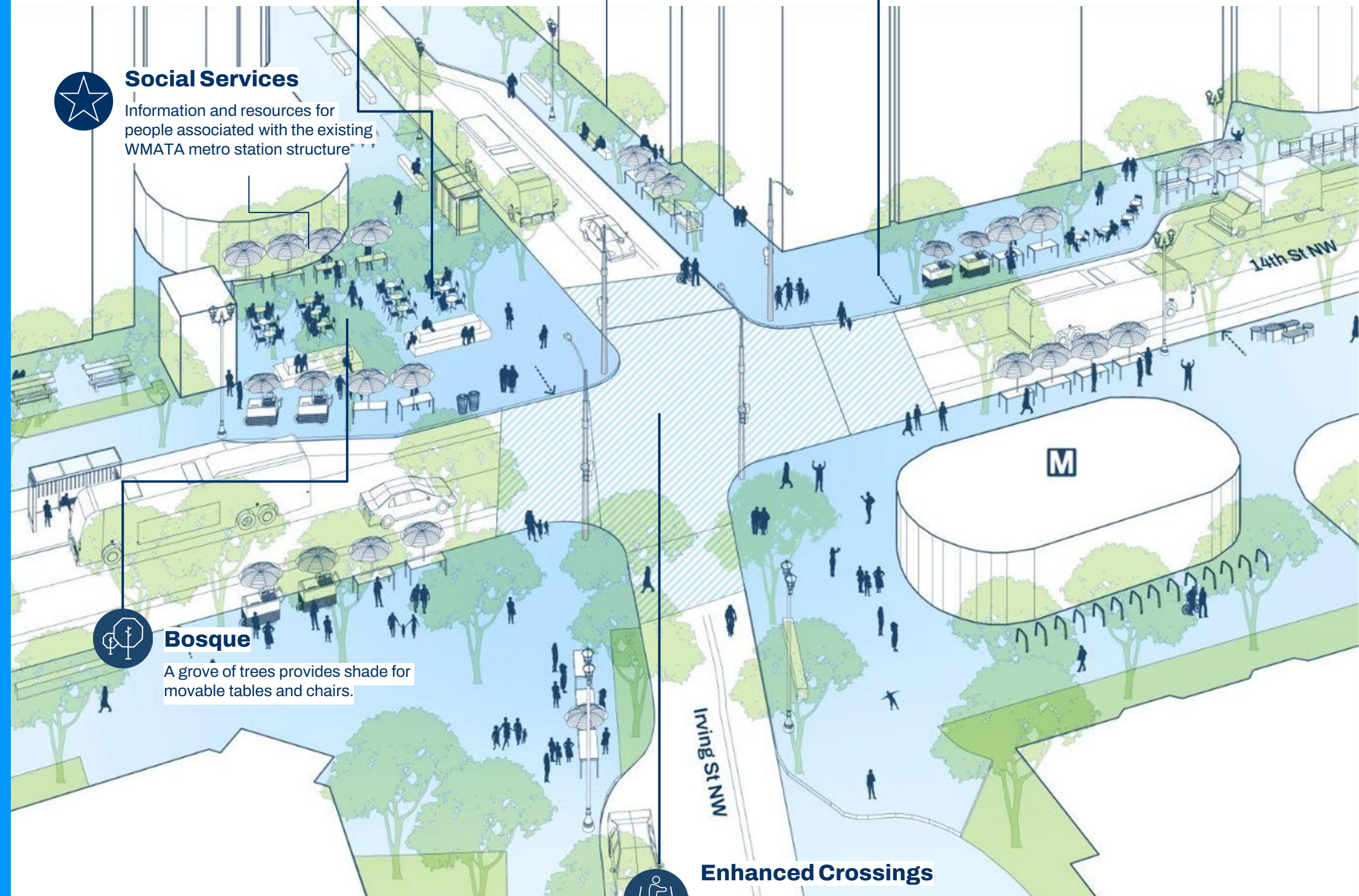
Bosque

A grove of trees provides shade for movable tables and chairs.



Enhanced Crossings

Explore opportunity for pavement markings, streetscape materials, and signalization that prioritizes pedestrian safety and comfort at particular intersections.





Small Parks

Oak Triangle: Knitting open space with the fabric of the neighborhood

Oak Triangle's recent public improvements can serve as a model for small-scale improvements to triangular park and plaza spaces throughout the study area. Maintenance and stewardship are key strategies for the success and viability of this space over time. Considerations around temporary street closures and other exterior public programming can help strengthen the neighbors' connection with this pocket park. Observation of this public space can be a helpful learning opportunity to be applied to other open spaces in the nearby area.

Girard Park: Better connecting a space for recreation and relaxation to the public realm

Improvements to Girard Park should reduce the emphasis of visual and physical barriers such as fences, walls, and steps where possible to better connect the park with the adjacent streetscape. Where these features remain, they can be integrated with public amenities such as shaded seating or leaning. Expanding the public realm allows for a moment of rest or destination to gather and connect with others. Shading the basketball court can support initiatives provided in the DPR's Ready2Play plan.



Seating

Providing seating in these small-scale spaces supports community gathering and areas for people to stop and rest.



Planting

Trees are critical in providing moments of shade and relief from the canopy-less 14th Street corridor. In particular, additional canopy trees at Girard Park can enhance the basketball court and other areas for active recreation.



Lively Edges

In areas where fences, walls, and other barriers are required, consider integrating seating and other ways of occupying edges to activate spaces and add additional ways for people to interact.



Safe and Open Sightlines

Appropriately limbed trees and low groundcovers allow clear sight lines and promote a feeling of safety, particularly at Girard Park. Fences and other more "porous" boundaries should be considered, rather than solid walls. Safety and intuitive wayfinding and orientation are important aspects in making the public realm inviting, comfortable, inclusive, and safe.



Lighting

Lighting small-scale spaces increases visibility and safety, and extends the life of these important components of the public realm. Consider pole lighting and string lighting for variety in character and visual interest.



Clear, Accessible Entrances

Creating open, inviting, safe areas that are intuitive in their wayfinding and access will help people discover and enjoy these smaller public spaces.

16th Street Corridor

A spine connecting Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant with significant community anchors

The 16th Street corridor is characterized by its role as a fast-moving vehicular route, connecting neighborhoods to the north with downtown Washington, DC. Interventions along the corridor should balance the need for efficient vehicular movement with improvements to the bus lanes on both sides of the street to ensure reliable transit service. The wide right-of-way offers opportunities to establish a boulevard-like character and connect prominent public spaces, such as the Powell Recreation Center and Mount Pleasant Library. This makes the corridor an essential location for prioritizing and improving the pedestrian experience, ensuring a safe and comfortable public realm.

Character Zones

Relinked Triangles

At 16th & Lamont Streets, three enhanced public spaces join to create a green gathering space that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Comfortable Thoroughfare

Focusing on high capacity transit, 16th Street is a lush corridor that offers shade and seating for pedestrians on the move.



16th Street
Context



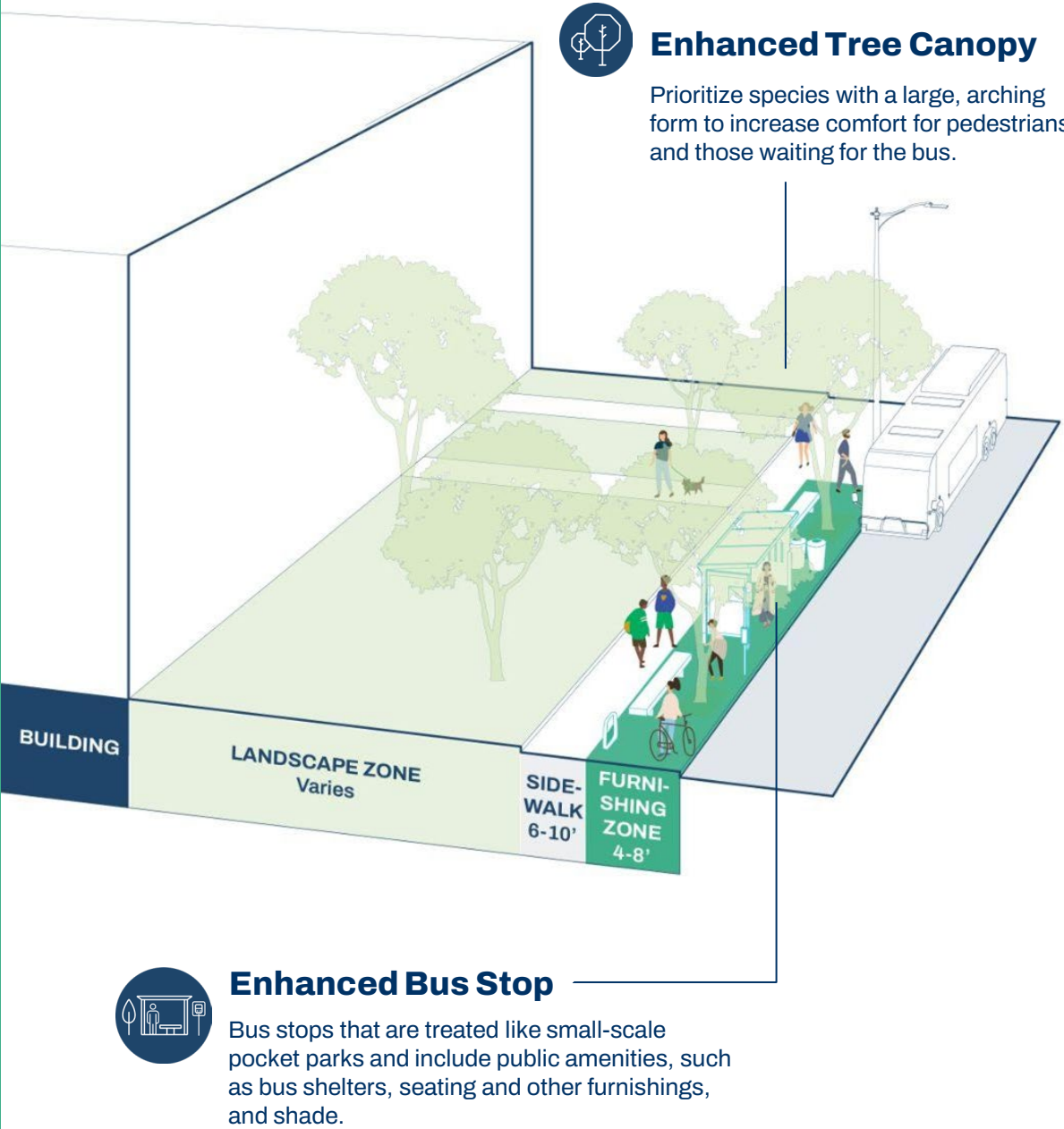
16th Street

A green, multi-modal boulevard connecting significant public open spaces

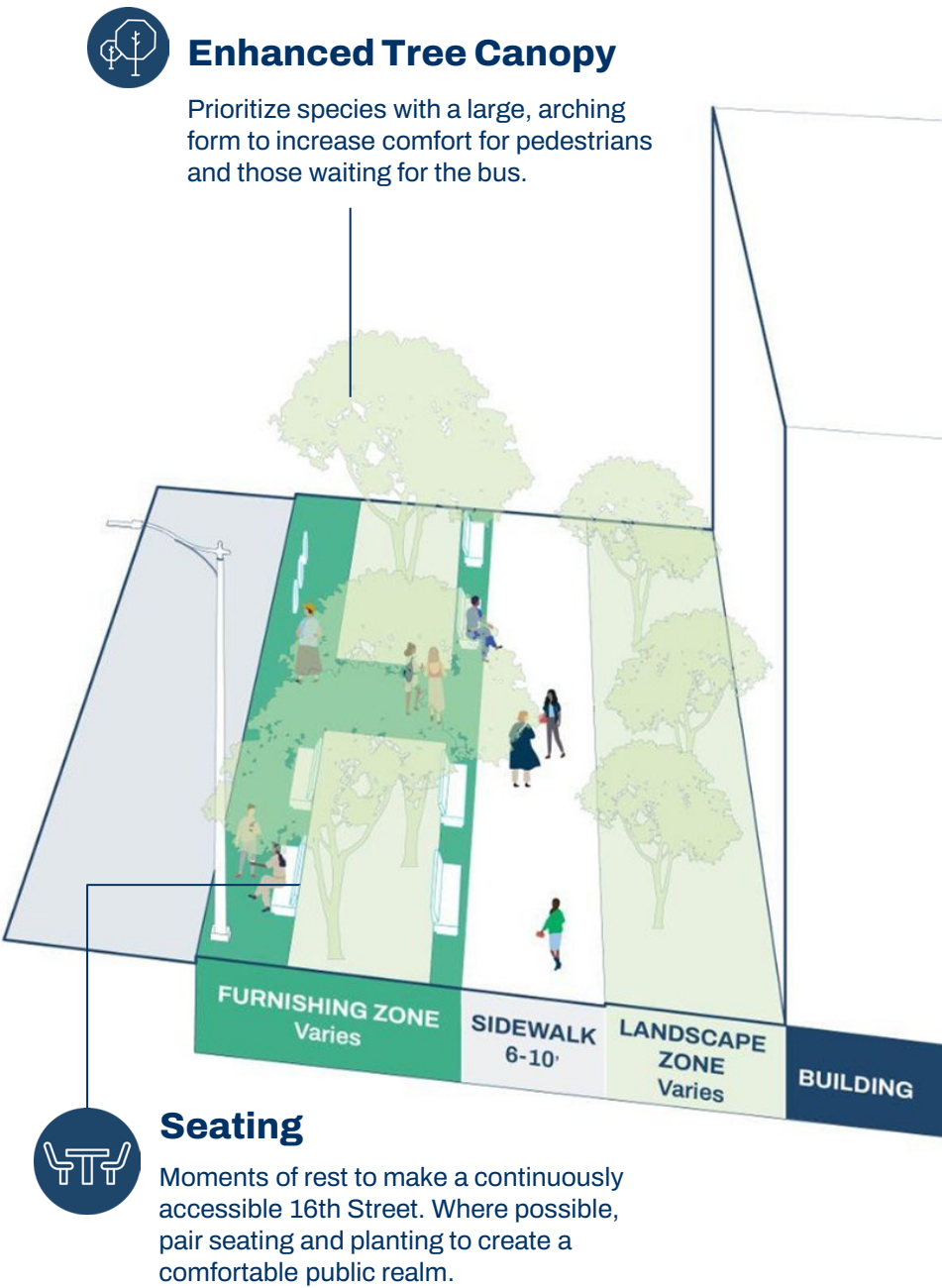
Reducing the vehicular speeds along the corridor will enhance the pedestrian experience and prioritize safety. Dedicated bus lanes have been newly realized and provide clear north-south connectivity. Building upon this enhanced connectivity, the newly imagined streetscape provides enhanced furnishing zones that invite people to more comfortably spend time along the street.

A tree canopy that prioritizes species with large, arching form can provide shade and water management benefits while defining the rhythm and spatial character of the pedestrian experience.

Streetscape with an Enhanced Bus Stop



Streetscape with Seating





Powell Playground + Library Triangle

Two newly connected public spaces that link to significant civic amenities for all ages

Linking the Powell Recreation Center with the Mount Pleasant Library across 16th Street is a significant opportunity for the community. These spaces can be reorganized to serve as better welcome mats, providing clarity in wayfinding and flexibility in both use and size of gathering. Reconfiguring planting and creating better sightlines reinforces an inviting and safe character with an intuitive connection and crossing. Legible paths and entrances, with seating areas that signify public space and encourage gathering, bring a pedestrian scale to this space. Streetscape enhancements prioritize pedestrian safety and promote a sense of connection at the crossing.

Limiting the drop-off loop between the Library and the green space to service and loading helps to orient the Library Triangle toward the Library's facade and provides a programmatic link for an outdoor reading nook and buffer from the vehicular character of 16th Street. At the same time, a dual orientation toward Powell Recreation Center is important to reinforce the connection across the corridor.



Safe and Open Sightlines

Reconfiguring planting and creating better sight lines reinforces an inviting and safe character with an intuitive connection and crossing.



Enhanced Crossings

Explore ways to strengthen the public realm relationship between Powell Playground and the Mount Pleasant Library, while focusing on improving pedestrian crossing safety along 16th Street.

Powell Playground



Seating

Integrated seating with planting better connects Powell Playground to the adjacent streetscape while providing much needed shade for families.



Central Gathering

Reorganizing the Library Triangle makes the space feel more welcoming and public, as well as creates greater flexibility in the type and size of gatherings.



Lively Edges

Outdoor reading nook and flexible seating create active edges and extend programming from the Library into the public realm.

Mount Pleasant Library



Clear, Accessible Entrances

Create a "welcome mat" with clear pathways and accessible seating that invites the public and encourages gathering.



Triangle Parks

Shrine Triangle: A quiet pocket park that supports adjacent community programming

The identity of Shrine Triangle responds to the close proximity of the Shrine of the Sacred Heart to the east and Powell Recreation Center to the south. This space currently supports intermittent public gathering, particularly on Sundays around church activity, and pop-up vending at other times throughout the week. The goal is to further support this neighborhood amenity by enhancing the connections to these adjacent spaces. Visually, better eye-level transparency can enhance safety and promote connectivity. Expanding sidewalks, removing the hedge, planting additional trees for shade, repairing paving, and providing better and more flexible furnishings can draw people into the center of the park.

16th + Irving Triangle: A small but mighty confluence of vending opportunity, transit, and gathering

This pocket plaza is uniquely positioned to support a variety of programs within a small area. A few enhancements, such as shade, materials, and furnishings, can turn this leftover space into a moment for gathering, resting, or vending. The bus stop can anchor the space with some improvements to the shelter and supporting amenities.

Kit of Parts



Seating

Movable tables and chairs provide flexible seating for community gathering. Focus seating at the center of these spaces to ground activity and serve as an everyday destination.



Planting

Trees at the edges can help to frame spaces at Shrine Triangle and 16th St and provide shade.



Temporary Street Closure

Temporary closures of Pine Street at Shrine of the Sacred Heart prioritize pedestrians and extend the public realm, allowing for pop-up events and everyday use. Allowing drop off or loading provides flexibility. Closure can be accomplished via signage or paving materials.



Safe and Open Sightlines

Appropriately limbed trees and low groundcovers allow clear sight lines and promote a feeling of safety. Fences and other more “porous” boundaries should be considered, rather than solid walls. Intuitive wayfinding and orientation are important aspects in making the public realm inviting, comfortable, inclusive, and safe.



Enhanced Bus Stop

Bus stops at these spaces include shade trees, shelter, seating, and other site furnishings to provide moments of rest and gathering.



Vending Zone

Establish safe and designated areas for vending.

Mount Pleasant Corridor

A green neighborhood main street with an active streatory culture and vibrant programming

Mount Pleasant’s northwest to southeast orientation opens up the opportunity for adjacent public open spaces of various sizes. The corridor has a green, walkable neighborhood character lined with an eclectic and thriving mix of brick-and-mortar commercial businesses and associated streateries.

The areas surrounding Mount Pleasant Street and Lamont Plaza are mainly brick paving and in varying conditions of disrepair. Brick is an appropriate material for areas that are more pedestrian and historic and provides a more intimate and approachable urban character. There are benefits to this paving system, including increased flexibility to access underground utilities and an accommodation of varied grades on the sidewalk. Appropriate setting bed materials and stabilization, along with ongoing maintenance, are important in maintaining the longevity and durability of this material.



Character Zones

Historic Plaza

Centered on Lamont Plaza, the public realm is upgraded to create a better platform for markets, events, and everyday enjoyment.

Neighborhood Main Street

Characterized by many streateries and Amigos Park, the street is activated by restaurants and storefronts — and accessibility is improved through enhanced maintenance of paving.

Green Gateway

Design enhancements reposition these green spaces as more inviting parks to spend time in.

Mount Pleasant
Context



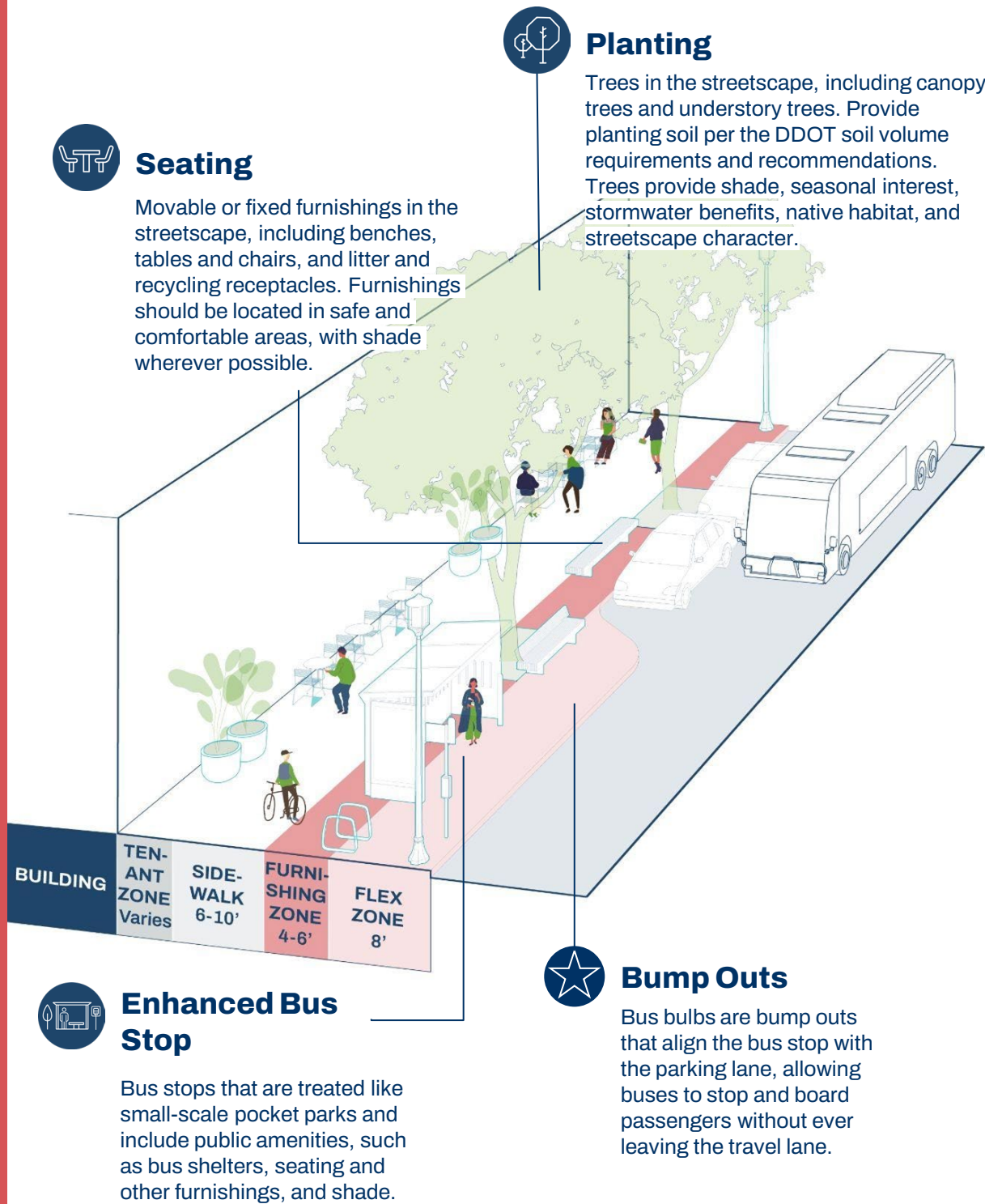
Mount Pleasant Street

A lively, green, pedestrian-oriented main street that supports and enhances the creative and multicultural character of the neighborhood

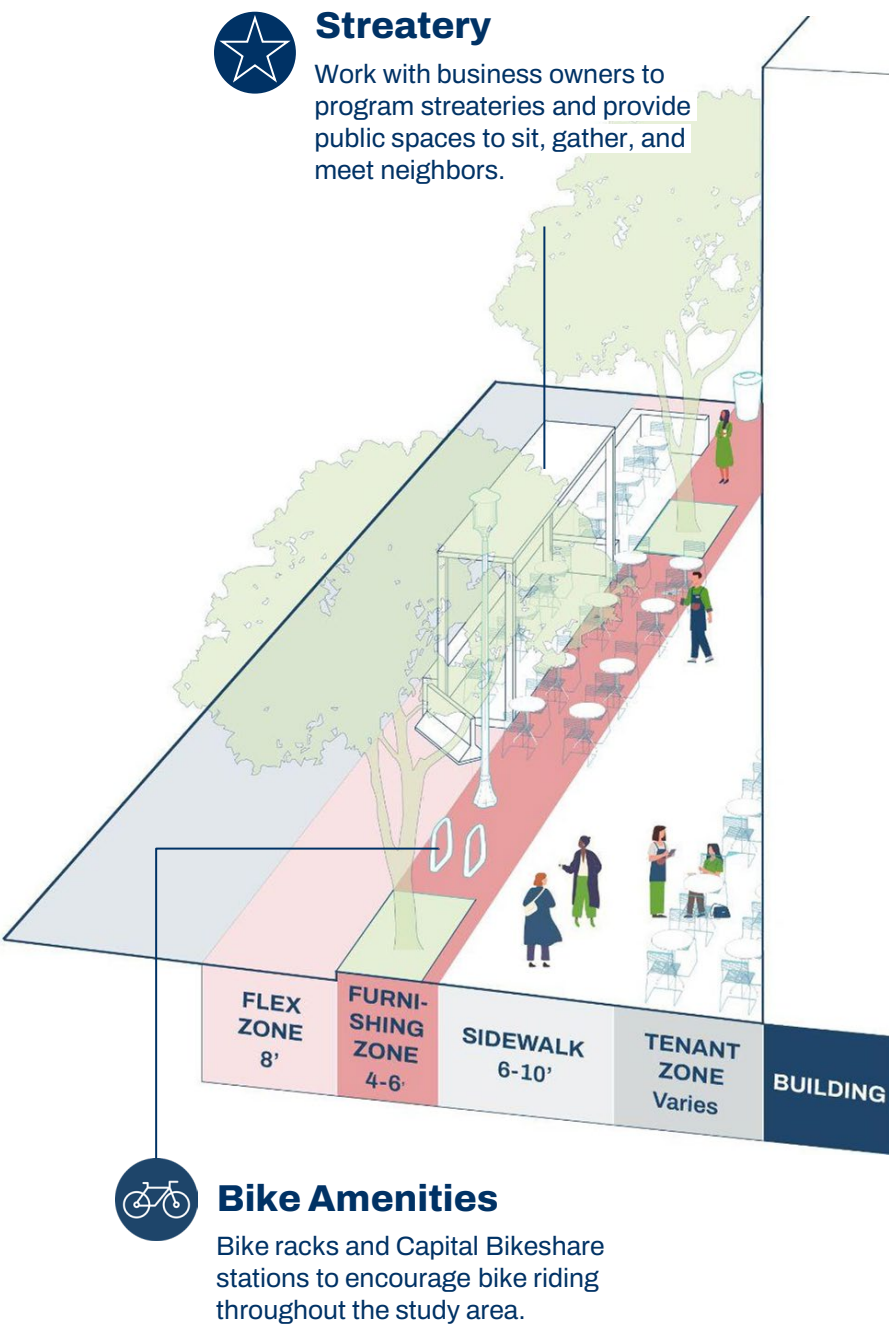
Building on the vibrant streatery culture that reflects the diversity of restaurants and commercial properties along Mount Pleasant, the streetscape is reimagined as a robust linear community space. Public amenities and open, inviting space are provided wherever a streatery occupies the sidewalk. Bus stops are enhanced with shelters and public amenities like seating to create moments of rest and gathering, enriching the pedestrian experience along the length of the street.

Preserving the neighborhood character, including maintaining and improving existing brick paving, is an important consideration along the Mount Pleasant corridor and surrounding areas. Paving repairs and appropriate details for new brick paving will be important in the accessibility and safety of sidewalks in the future.

Streetscape with an Enhanced Bus Stop



Streetscape with a Streatery



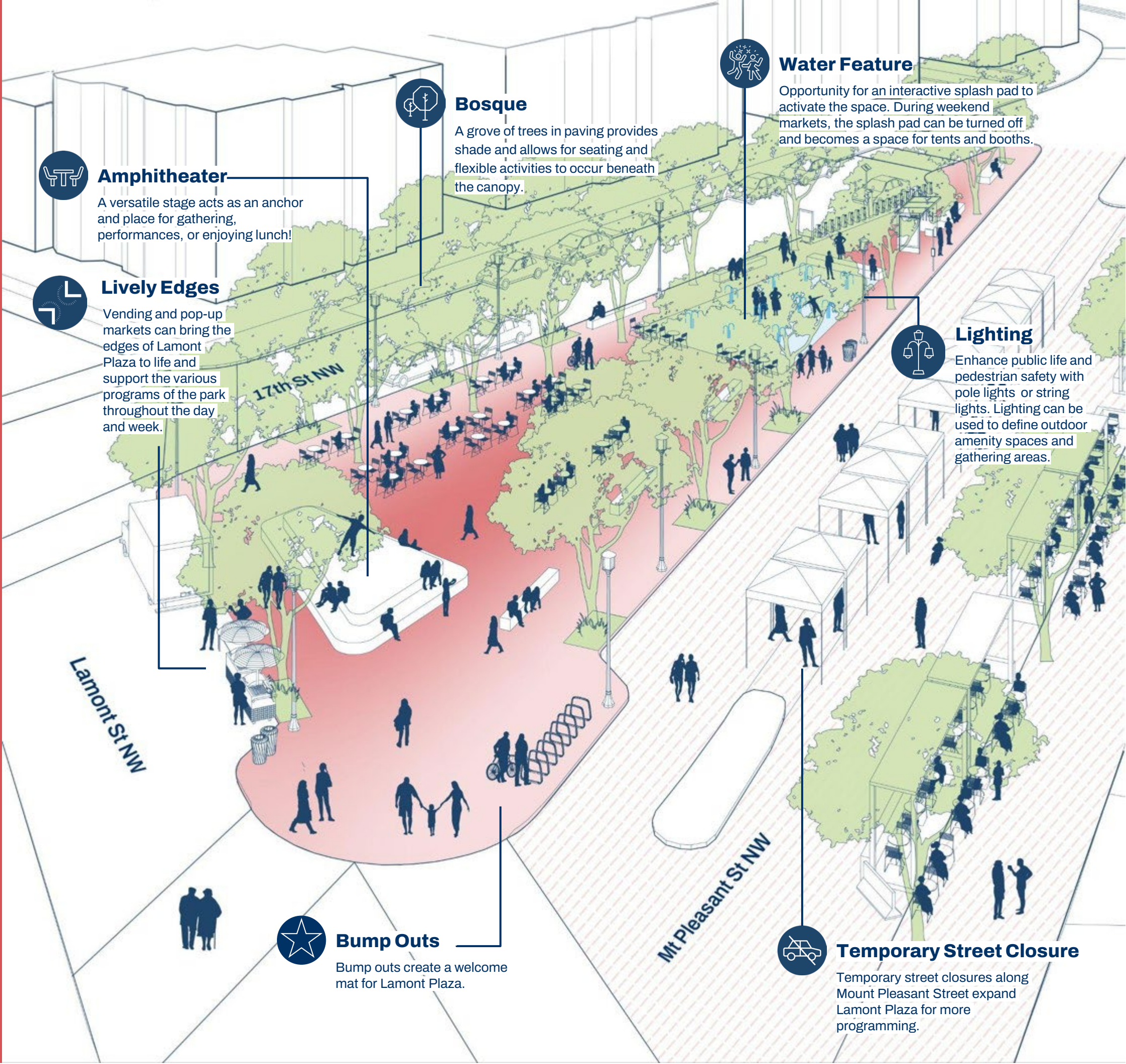


Lamont Plaza

A beloved neighborhood plaza designed for everyday use and vibrant community programming and events

Lamont Plaza is the core gathering place along Mount Pleasant Street, a quality that can be enhanced. First, reorganize the plaza to create different zones that encourage a greater diversity of activity, programming, and enhanced comfort. Second, enhance flexibility of the space with paving improvements, better site furnishings, and shading at the edges. Special moments, such as a stage or new water feature can serve both everyday use and as an iconic destination fostering community pride.

Consider intermittent open streets as a pilot project, with the opportunity to extend the pedestrian plaza across Mount Pleasant. The closure of the small street that bisects the triangle can allow for more flexibility in programming and better connect bike share and bus shelter uses with the rest of the plaza.





Neighborhood Parks

Rabaut Park: A park and gateway that provides a green respite and anchors the intersection of Mount Pleasant Street and 16th Street NW

Improving the legibility of entrances provides an inviting and safe park with better connections to the adjacent streets and neighborhoods. Appropriate planting, paired with lighting, improves visibility and safety. Temporary street closures improve access to the park and open opportunities for enhanced programming and services. A central lawn with water feature focuses activity and gathering and supports a peaceful urban park “escape” in contrast with the surrounding busy streets.

Francis Asbury: Gateway anchor for Mount Pleasant neighborhood

Reconfiguration of this space provides for flexible, occupiable edges for gathering and an accessible, open ‘welcome mat’ that serves as an inviting gateway and connection to the nearby Rabaut Park. The sloped landscape can be reconfigured as an occupiable edge along 16th Street and Mount Pleasant Street, better connecting the park to the street. Its proximity to Rabaut means that this park can provide something different – perhaps a place where neighbors can walk their dog or a colorful garden backdrop. At the core, the interventions are focused on making this park more comfortable, accessible, and usable as a well-maintained space.



Temporary Street Closure

Intermittent closing of Mount Pleasant Street and Harvard Street can provide opportunities to connect Rabaut and Francis Asbury as a significant open space and gateway for the Mount Pleasant neighborhood. Larger, pedestrian oriented programming can be accommodated in these moments. Closure can be accomplished via signage or paving materials.



Lively Edges

Reorganize the space around Rabaut Park to create a porous but structured outer perimeter, occupiable edges (seat walls, benches) around the center, and a focus on the central gathering green.

Francis Asbury’s berms can be reconfigured to become low walls with integrated seating.



Clear, Accessible Entrances

Creating open, inviting, safe areas that are intuitive in their wayfinding and access will help people discover and enjoy these public spaces. Cueing pedestrians to the entrances links these areas as integral to the public realm and destinations within the surrounding neighborhood.



Safe and Open Sightlines

Appropriately limbed trees and low groundcovers allow clear sight lines and promote a feeling of safety.



Central Gathering

Centralizing the gathering space provides an open area that is flexible to accommodate various programming. This space can be a combination of paving, open lawn, and a water feature, surrounded by active, occupiable edges.



Pocket Parks

Amigos Park: An outdoor living room for a variety of everyday uses where neighbors gather together

Amigos Park is currently undergoing renovation by DGS and DPR, and its design must build on both these efforts and the community-led activation already underway to formalize this pocket park. As a project rooted in listening, learning, and collaboration, the approach should strengthen community ownership while aligning with ongoing public investment.

Design considerations should include connections to the existing bus shelter, along with lighting and site furnishings that create a safe, comfortable, and inviting public space. These improvements will reinforce the park’s role as a welcoming neighborhood asset while aligning public investment with community priorities.



Enhanced Bus Stop

Bus stops at these spaces include shade trees, shelter, seating, and other site furnishings to provide moments of rest and gathering that feel integrated with the park experience..



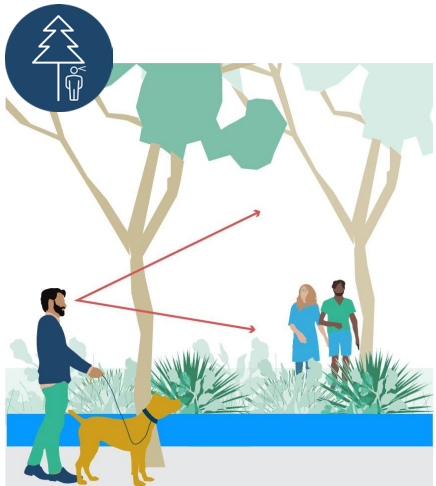
Seating

Well-designed and cohesive movable tables and chairs provide flexible seating for community gathering and reflect an identity of casual gathering. Focus seating at the center of these spaces to ground activity and serve as an everyday destination.



Lighting

Lighting small-scale spaces increases visibility and safety, and extends the life of these important components of the public realm. Consider pole lighting and string (catenary) lighting for variety in character and visual interest.



Safe and Open Sightlines

Appropriately limbed trees and low groundcovers allow clear sight lines and promote a feeling of safety.

East-West Corridors

Key links between the Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant neighborhoods

The east-west connections between Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant facilitate movement and exchange at a neighborhood and district scale. Narrow right-of-ways require careful consideration for safe and accessible pedestrian and/or bicycle routes. However, narrow rights-of-way require thoughtful design to ensure safe and accessible pedestrian and/or bicycle routes. These east-west streets also hold potential for creating spaces that relieve congestion along the 14th Street corridor and better support a variety of businesses. Mitigation efforts for these issues can also be repeated to aid in east-west corridor issues throughout the entire District.

Character Zones

Residential Park Road

To the west, Park Road is more residential. Enhanced sidewalks would make this street more inviting and comfortable for pedestrians.

Civic Irving

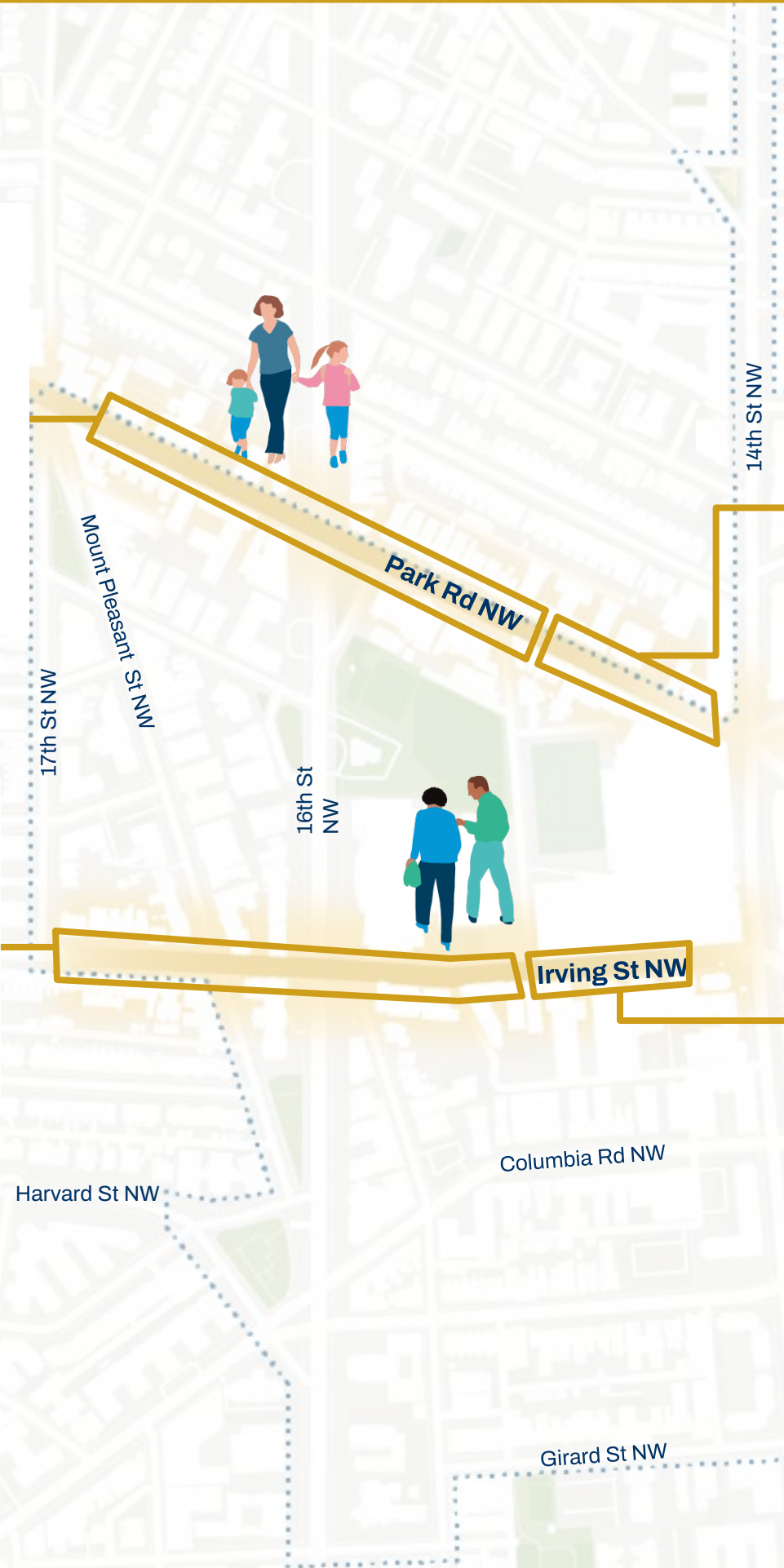
To the west, Irving St runs along residences and the local high school. Narrow sections, from 16th to 15th Street, present opportunities for sidewalk widening and traffic-calming measures to enhance safety and accessibility.

Commercial Park Road

To the east, Park Road offers many small businesses. With newly widened sidewalks and a bike lane, the street can encourage pedestrian activity.

Commercial Irving

Adjacent to DC USA, this section of Irving St offers wide sidewalks with opportunities to add more elements for comfort and to activate vacant storefronts.



East-West Corridor
Context



Increase pedestrian and bike character

Park Road NW & Irving St NW

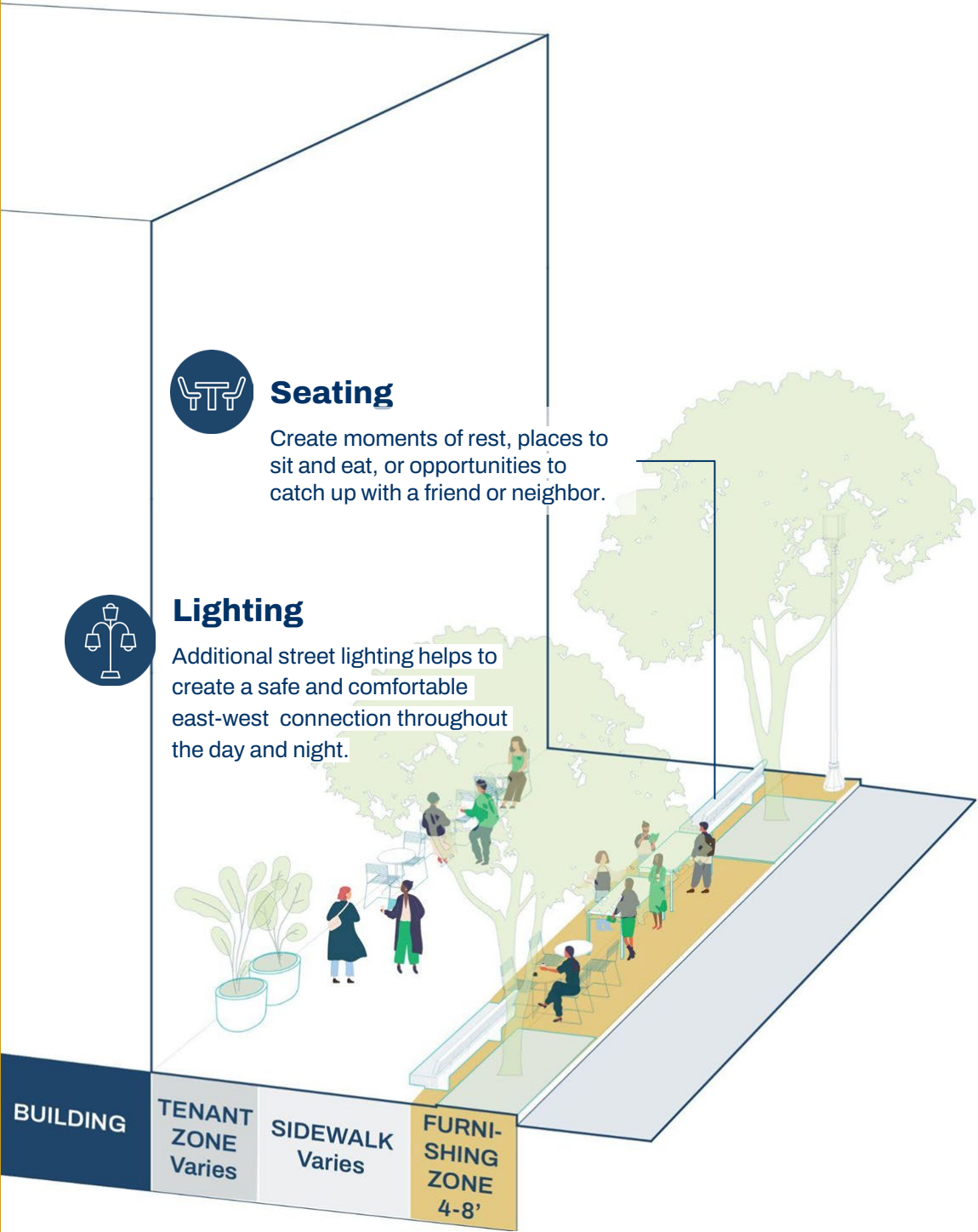
A key east-west link that expands sidewalks and bike infrastructure for safer, more comfortable connections

Enhancing pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure can create comfortable, vibrant connections between Mount Pleasant and Columbia Heights. Considering repurposing a parking lane along Park Road could create a one-way, grade-separated bike lane and wider sidewalks.

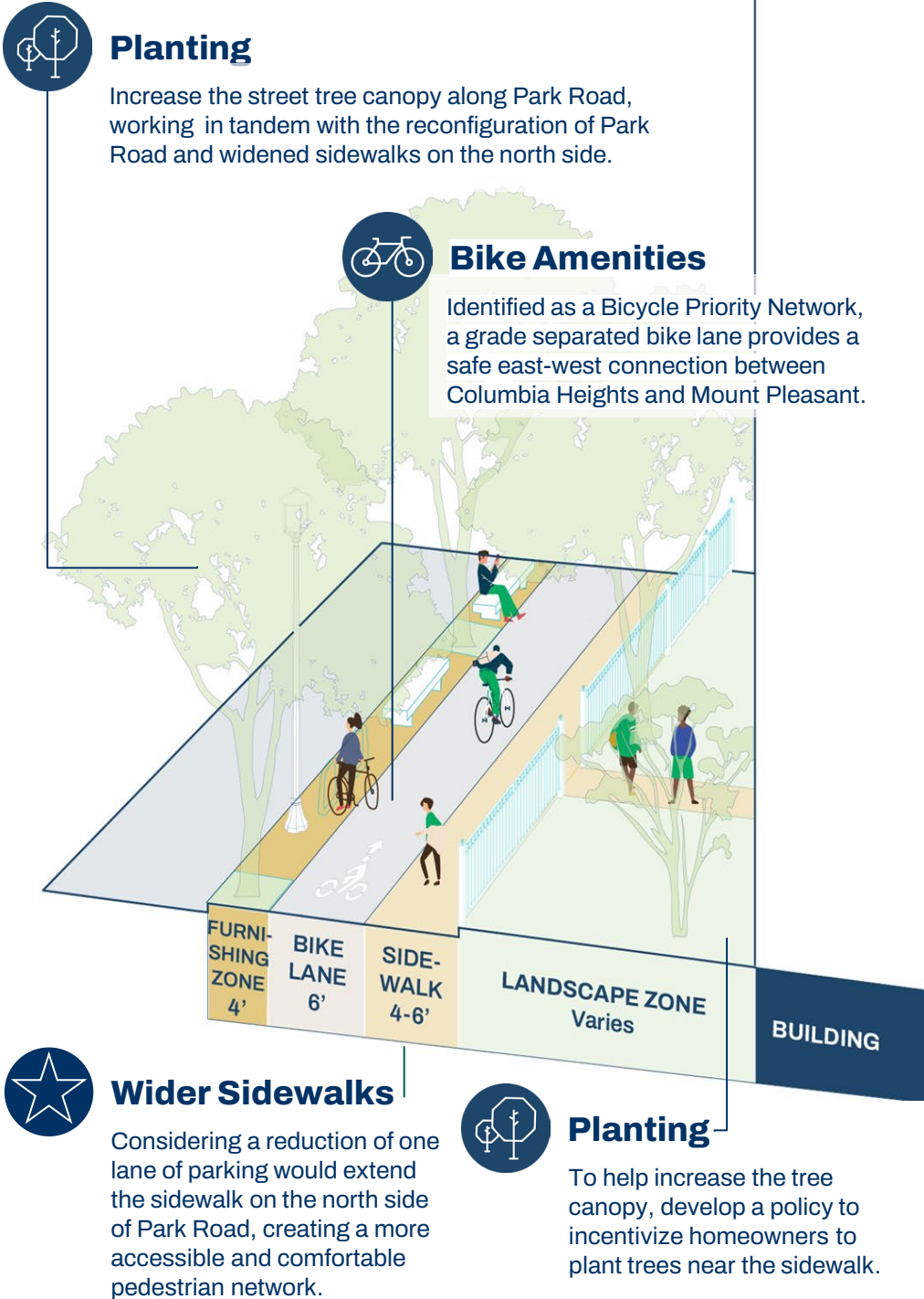
Traffic calming measures like reducing speed limit or the inclusion of speed bumps can also make cyclists and pedestrians feel safer. In some cases, where adding street trees is not feasible, planting trees on private property at the edge of public right-of-ways can provide a shaded pedestrian experience and enhance the character of the streetscape.

Much of Irving Street’s length in Columbia Heights features atypically wide sidewalks. The wider sidewalks provide extra room to better accommodate vending and public seating, which better enables vendors to disperse from the crowded intersection at 14th Street. Irving Street can be made more comfortable and safe by expanding sidewalks in narrower sections of the corridor, providing better lighting and seating with shade, and a strategy for activating blank or underutilized storefront facades.

Commercial Streetscape



Streetscape with Bike Lane



4

Vending Study

4.1 Promising Practices

4.2 Opportunities

Background

Balancing the needs of public space users with vending activity is essential. This is especially true in high traffic areas, like Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant, where congestion can cause safety issues, limit accessibility, and detract from the overall experience of the public realm.

To address these challenges, the District can connect vendors with available resources, integrate vending into public space planning, and adopt measures that reduce congestion and improve circulation in shared spaces. These efforts require coordination among DC agencies, working in partnership with private actors including business service providers, design practices, and local place management organizations.

Any efforts to support vending and improve the experience of the public realm must be accompanied by effective enforcement measures. While the promising practices and opportunities identified in this study would be beneficial for both vendors and other users of public space, they require a degree of organization that is not achievable through incentives alone. Enforcement mechanisms are essential to address circumstances where laws and regulations are not being followed, so that vendors that are in compliance are able to succeed.

By establishing a robust framework for vending zones, the District can improve its public spaces and provide equitable economic opportunities across neighborhoods.

This study examines promising practices for sidewalk vending from across the country and highlights opportunities for Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant.

4.1

Promising Practices

BIG TRENDS AND TAKEAWAYS

Methodology

The Promising Practices research is an analysis of sidewalk vending, with specific focus on Latin American diasporas, to glean lessons and best practices on physical urban form and infrastructure, governance and policy, and community sentiment and involvement, that support equitable street vending in mixed-use neighborhoods and commercial districts.

The following framework was developed to guide our evaluation of each promising community:

- **Context/History Of Sidewalk Vending:** What were the community demographics like prior to the introduction of street vending, and have they changed since? Why did sidewalk vending first begin in the community and how has its purpose evolved? How have political contexts changed and what have its impacts been on sidewalk vending?
- **Local Sentiments & Community Engagement:** What were initial sentiments toward sidewalk vending and how has it changed over the years within the neighborhood and citywide? Were there key advocacy or political campaigns in support of or against sidewalk vending? What were their impacts on local sentiments?
- **Impact Of Sidewalk Vending On Urban Form & Infrastructure:** How have sidewalk vending practices changed the public realm/streets and the experience of users in the public realm? Have the needs of vendors evolved over time and how has that impacted public infrastructure?

- **Streetscape & Infrastructure Solutions:** How has existing public infrastructure been adapted to support, prevent, or mitigate sidewalk vending? How were improvements funded and managed?

A **shortlist of selected communities** was determined based on population densities and demography/size of immigrant population:

- Eastern Market (Washington, DC)
- Flatbush Caton Market (Brooklyn, NY)
- Corona Plaza (Queens, NY)
- Historic Market Square (San Antonio, TX)
- Downtown Miami (Miami, FL)
- Downtown Atlanta (Atlanta, GA)
- Downtown Portland (Portland, OR)
- 16th Street Mall (Denver, CO)
- Mission District (San Francisco, CA)
- Los Angeles County (Los Angeles, CA)

The following section is focused on **four key takeaways** from the Promising Practices research:

1. Visual clutter and sensory intensity can be improved to shift public perception of street vending.
2. Year-round, permanent vending structures require dedicated spaces, careful design, and annual maintenance budgets.
3. Successful indoor market halls require a committed owner and management team that leads the design of the facility, plus ongoing programming, maintenance & marketing.
4. Street vendors contribute to our local economies and deserve to be engaged in neighborhood planning processes and given opportunities like other micro businesses.

BIG TRENDS AND TAKEAWAYS

Visual clutter and sensory intensity can be improved to shift public perception of street vending.

1

The variety of vendors and the merchandise and food on offer create intense smells, sights, and sounds for users of the public realm. While the excitement and liveliness it creates may draw visitors back again to the space, it may also be overwhelming for users seeking order and consistency.

To address this challenge, vendors associations in other cities have created standardized, district-branded toolkits of furniture for use by vendors, to help reduce sensory overload and create some level of order in the public realm.



The suite of standardized furniture and accessories often includes tents and umbrellas for shade, tables and tablecloths, coolers, trash receptacles, foldable chairs, and carts. These may be leased out annually to each vendor, and/or owned and managed by a local place-management entity.

2

In other cities, **simple design guidelines have been created to inform the fabrication of vendors' carts and stands** to not only maintain consistency in design but to ensure the safety and health of all public space users.



1

TOOLKIT OF PARTS



Corona Plaza (Queens, New York)

In Queens, the Corona Plaza Vendors Association, the permit holder on behalf of vendors operating on the plaza, sets up 14 tents daily. Each tent is equipped with changeable overhead business signage and one table for merchandise display. All other equipment is brought on-site by individual vendors daily, as needed.

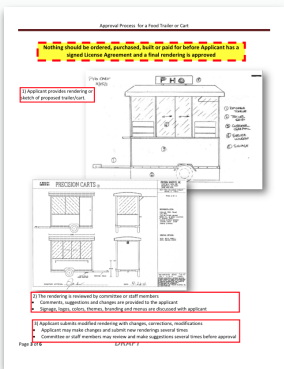
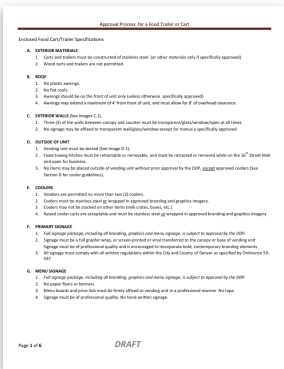




Downtown Miami (Miami, FL)

The Downtown Development Authority provides vendors under its Special Vending District program access to a suite of accessories at no cost (a \$550 fully refundable deposit is required to cover any damage/replacement costs). These include Downtown Miami-branded umbrellas, coolers, aprons, stools/chairs, trash receptacle, apron/cap that are all leased out for a year to each vendor and helps create clear visual cues for permit enforcers.

2

BASELINE DESIGN GUIDELINES





Downtown Denver (Denver, CO)

The Downtown Denver Partnership reviews and approves the design of food cart/merchandise trailers on behalf of the City as the administrator of temporary revocable licenses that enable micro-businesses to vend on 16th Street Mall. To streamline approval processes and offer guidance to interested applicants, DDP clearly outlines specifications that detail allowable materials, signage, and display requirements.

BIG TRENDS AND TAKEAWAYS

Year-round, permanent vending structures require dedicated spaces, careful design and annual maintenance budgets.

To formalize vending activity at key parks and public spaces, cities have in the past designed, constructed, and installed permanent kiosks/structures for lease by local vendors and small businesses. These kiosks can take a number of different forms and are typically managed by the city with maintenance costs passed on to lease holders.

1

Designing year-round kiosks for vendors requires significant investment and research & development in order to ensure sufficient flexibility and modularity to the design to be adaptable to changes in tenancy, consumers’ preferences/journeys, and, most importantly, climate/weather conditions. In addition, permanent vending units require significant maintenance*, especially from the wear and tear of use by multiple vendors.

2

In other cities, **place-management entities oversee clusters of vendors with permanent/semi- permanent structures on underutilized sites** as a temporary use, or in the public right-of-way (as appropriate).

**Note: The City of Atlanta spends on average more than \$100,000 maintaining each kiosk, including cost of regular cleaning, repairs, and utility.*

1

KIOSKS FOR MERCHANDISE VENDORS



Downtown Atlanta (Atlanta, GA)

In 2008, a new public vending ordinance was passed by Atlanta City Council authorizing the Mayor to enter into a public-private partnership with General Growth Properties, Inc. (GGP) to design, construct, install, and manage a series of public vending kiosks in the City’s right-of-way (parks, sidewalks, plazas). Each kiosk was custom designed and locally fabricated by a firm specializing in the design of retail merchandising units in shopping centers, and therefore included carefully considered display racks/stands and counter spaces. As mall owners, GGP had managed retail kiosks in a wide variety of shopping malls and open air shopping centers, understood both the requirements/needs of retail tenants, the financial feasibility of operating, and managing such vending kiosks.

2

FOOD VENDOR PODS



Downtown Portland (Portland, OR)

In 2018, with the support of Portland’s Mayor and City Council, Friends of Green Loop (a community-based advocacy organization) began working with Portland Bureau of Transportation and the food cart owners at Ankeny Square in downtown Portland to begin planning for a new site/location along the Green Loop. When fully implemented, carts will be located on curbside spaces and on closed streets, or what will be known as ‘Cart Blocks’.

Friends of Green Loop, in partnership with the City, will serve as a ‘property management’ company. Any revenue from rental and utility fees will go back toward maintenance of the Cart Block and the larger culinary corridor project along the Green Loop.

BIG TRENDS AND TAKEAWAYS

Successful indoor market halls require a committed owner/management team that leads the design of the facility, plus ongoing programming, maintenance & marketing.

Indoor markets are a unique solution to give vendors a year-round permanent space that protects them from climate conditions and any unplanned interactions with enforcement agencies. However, successful indoor market models require an ideal location with high rates of visibility and accessibility to customers and foot traffic.

1 Indoor market spaces need to be carefully designed and informed by the spatial and utility needs of individual vendors. In addition, creative financing and leasing structures need to be put in place to ensure the sustainability of the market and equity for vendors. Ongoing market management and brand and marketing support must be built in as wraparound support services for vendors to ensure year-round flow of customer traffic.

2 Beyond housing vendors, market halls have the opportunity to become a year-round destination for cultural experiences when carefully tenanted with a wide mix of produce, prepared foods, and merchandise goods, and supported by pedestrian-friendly spaces such as plazas that enable large-scale cultural events and celebrations.

1

FLATBUSH CATON MARKET



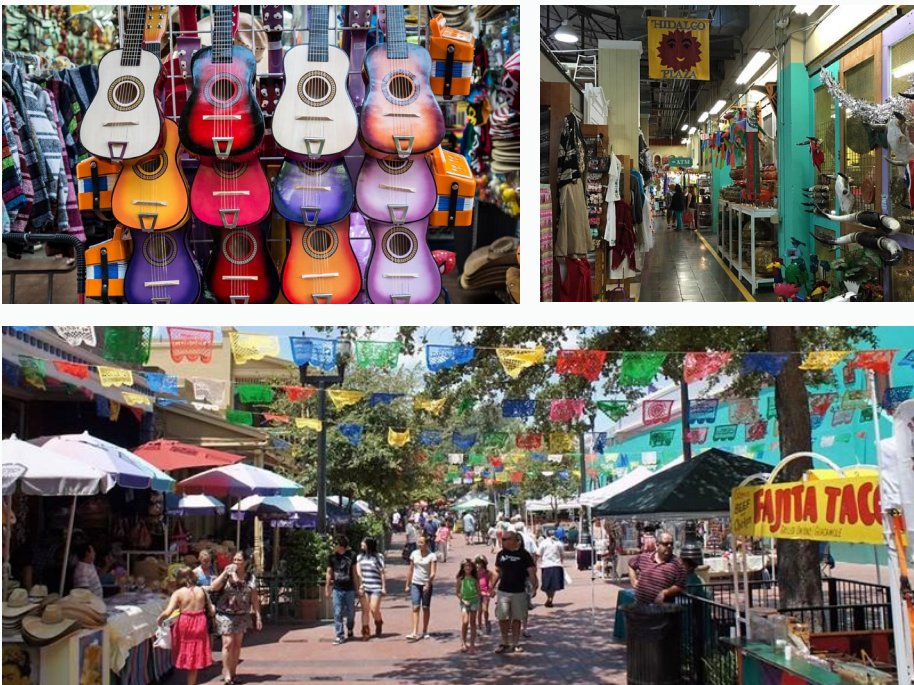
Flatbush Caton Market (Brooklyn, NY)

Flatbush Caton Market was expanded and renovated as part of a larger mixed-use, mixed income development. The developers worked closely with existing vendors at the former market hall to ensure the design of the market included turn-key spaces equipped with a range of cold and dry storage options, premium gas appliances, point-of-sale systems, and 3-compartment sinks, handwashing sink, steel work table, and refrigerated prep tables. Vendors lease market spaces based on performance (or a percentage of monthly sales), giving them the flexibility of payment, and pay additional common area maintenance (CAM) and utilities fee at below-market rates.

In addition, the development team continues to provide vendors with direct business technical assistance, offering marketing, e-commerce, merchandising, business planning, and financial management trainings in English and Creole, as well as securing wholesale relationships with local and national vendors to minimize supply chain costs and issues commonly faced by micro entrepreneurs.

2

PUBLIC MARKET MODEL



Historic Market Square (San Antonio, TX)

The City of San Antonio owns and manages both the Farmers Market and El Mercado. More than 100 vendors currently operate out of both indoor market properties at the Historic Market Square. During the area's redevelopment in 1976, new infrastructure was added to support the bustling market activities, including the creation of plazas, fountains, and shaded seating areas outdoors. The plaza hosts significant cultural celebrations such as Cinco de Mayo, Fiesta de Los Reyes, and Día de los Muertos, reinforcing its role as the City's cultural hub.

BIG TRENDS AND TAKEAWAYS

Street vendors can support local economies and contribute to neighborhood planning efforts.

When street vendors are supported through permitting and licensing processes, they are more likely to contribute significantly to the local economy. However, vendors still face considerable regulatory hurdles, particularly food vendors who must meet an extensive list of health requirements, such as access to cottage food operations or home kitchens, 3-compartment sinks, and food storage equipment. Beyond these requirements, challenges like language barriers and lack of trust in government authorities persist.

1 Few cities today take a care-first regulatory approach to street vending. However, Los Angeles County’s Department of Economic Opportunity is leading this approach by providing wrap-around micro business services, including training and workshops on how to obtain Compact Mobile Food Operations (CMFO) permits, providing permits at reduced rates of up to 75% of total permitting costs (including inspections), and manufacturing compliant food carts to be granted to eligible sidewalk vendors at no cost.

2 Other cities are bypassing street vending regulations altogether by piloting new classes of market permits that can be held by local non-profit organizations.

1

REGULATORY CHANGES & TECHNICAL SUPPORT



LA County (Los Angeles, CA)

Following a decade of advocacy to progressively regulate street vendors, the State of California made critical amendments to the California Retail Food Code that lowered the barriers to legal operation for food vendors. Chief among them was the creation of a new category of food operations: “Compact Mobile Food Operation”. CMFOs include all mobile food facilities that operate from an individual or from a pushcart, stand, display, pedal-driven cart, wagon, showcase, rack, or other non motorized conveyance, and that conduct limited food preparation.

In addition, a statewide ban was lifted on reheating foods cooked at a licensed commissary kitchen or storing those foods on a heated tray or in a heated container — further reducing the need to cook raw meat at all from a food cart. For vendors that do not cook raw meat on the cart, triple-basin sinks are no longer requirements as part of their cart designs, and additionally street vendors can now work with local community organizations to designate a handwashing sink to serve multiple street vendors — similar to California’s requirements for temporary vendors at farmers’ markets.

2

FORMAL MARKET PERMIT AND SHARED COMMUNITY AGREEMENT



Corona Plaza (Queens, NY)

In 2022, New York City developed a pilot permit to enable vendors to operate as a formal market at Corona Plaza. The permit, which continues to be in use today, enables 14+ vendors to operate on the plaza at a time, on a rotational basis, as managed by local non-profit Corona Plaza Vendors Association (“the permit holder”). The vendor rotation map was developed with the consumer perspective in mind. It designates spots by food items, rather than individual businesses, to enable vendors selling similar items to rotate throughout the week, limiting changes in the variety of food for consumers. This permit builds on the vendors’ self government efforts, which included the development of a shared community agreement signed by all vendors, with clauses to ensure trash is managed cooperatively, additional part time sanitation support is hired, and sidewalk clearances are maintained in accordance with city regulations.

4.2

Opportunities

Summary & Guiding Principles

Based on promising practices research and engagement with local vendors, this study identifies several opportunities guided by the following core principles:

- 1. **Integrate vending into the streetscape** to reduce visual clutter;
- 2. **Support vendors that comply** with health requirements, permits, and other regulatory requirements, while **ensuring effective enforcement** for instances of noncompliance;
- 3. **Create dedicated spaces for vending within the public realm** while supporting efficient pedestrian flow, keeping wide sidewalk space, and maintaining pedestrian enjoyment of the corridor.

These principles respond to challenges faced by users of the public realm, including pedestrians, local business owners and street vendors. These opportunities include potential actions that can be taken by the District government, businesses, and place management entities. To be effective, these actions must be balanced with an effective enforcement mechanism for vending.

Each opportunity highlights one of four categories that it can help to address: Design, Operations, Governance/Management, and Indoor Storage/Vending Location. Each opportunity includes potential next steps and key entities to support.

DESIGN

Designate vendor-friendly spots along 14th Street

The intersection of 14th Street and Irving Street is a highly competitive intersection for vending due to its unmatched visibility to a core customer base: shoppers at DCUSA and commuters from the Metro and bus stops. Given that this trend is unlikely to change in the near term, flexibility in the public realm, whether on sidewalks or curbside, will need to be maintained to enable vendors to stay in and around this intersection without impeding pedestrian flow.

Designated vendor-friendly spots should be managed by the **vending zone manager**(within DLCP), a designated liaison for vendors with local businesses and residents who also manages vendor operations and provides technical assistance to vendors to ensure they meet their licensing and permit requirements. The spots should also abide by existing regulations, including:

- Maintenance of at least 7 ft. clear passageway
- Located outside curbside zone designated and demarcated as being for transit
- Located outside loading or parking zone or other curbside locations for vehicle use (unless DDOT Public Space Rental Permit has been acquired)
- Located outside 20 ft. of Metro entrance



Legend:
□ DLCP-approved vending spots on sidewalks to be equipped with visible marker or signage and adjacent to tree canopy

14th Street/Irving Street

OPERATIONS

Design and provide vendor-friendly spots & a core kit of furnishings

High-priority vending zones for licensed vendors can have clear **floor or standalone markers and signs** to enhance visibility for enforcement. Additionally, they should include **tree canopy or shaded structures**, **containerized trash cans**, and, where possible, access to metered utilities such as power and water.

A place management entity could consider developing a standardized kit of furnishings and equipment, available for purchase or lease. These kits can be offered to vendors when they complete the formalization process. Kits can include elements like weather-resistant tents or umbrellas, folding tables and chairs, containerized trash and recycling receptacles, and branded vending zone signage, with optional items like portable lighting or lockable storage provided where appropriate. These standardized components help to ensure that all vendors have access to durable, recognizable equipment that distinguishes permitted vendors from unpermitted ones.

Captions:

- 1-3. Neighborhood-branded public realm furnishings, including tents/canopies, umbrellas, movable tables/chairs for customers, and barricades. Source: Meatpacking District and Downtown Brooklyn Partnership
- 4-5. Neighborhood-branded vendor furnishings such as movable vendor booths and signage. Source: Pinterest



OPERATIONS

Establish design guidelines for vending zones and mobile vending units

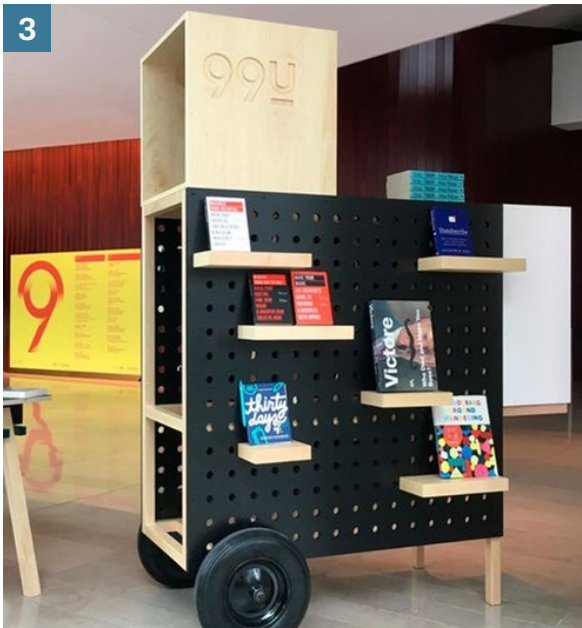
To address the rules surrounding permitted vending carts that limit innovative vending unit designs, vending zone managers or other place-based management entities should develop a new set of approved vending units for merchandise vendors.

Non-food vendors in vending zones typically sell items such as clothing, accessories, general merchandise, home furnishings, electronics, and personal care products. The newly commissioned merchandise vending units should meet the following criteria:

- Foldable and compact for easy storage and transport
- Mobile and equipped with wheels for convenient movement
- Modular and flexible display shelves, such as pegboards, and surfaces for both vertical and horizontal merchandise display
- Integrated storage that can be secured

Similarly, leasable anchor food vending units should meet the same criteria, with additional traits that ensure food vendors comply with health requirements, including:

- Food preparation and packaging surface with compartments for ingredients and condiments
- Built-in coolers and cooling fridge box
- Built-in trash can and composting bin



These units can be owned and managed by a place management entity and leased to vendors or made available for purchase.

Captions:

1-3. Example of storage tower (on wheels) with pegboard display. Source: Quark, Umproject

4-5. Outdoor kitchen unit including surface area for food preparation and packaging, storage drawers, evaporative cooling fridge box, sink, and built-in trash can/composting bin. Source: Dinettes

GOVERNANCE/MANAGEMENT

Establish an interagency street vending task force

Street vendors and technical assistance providers who were engaged through the project process unanimously shared concerns around limited interagency coordination, which often impacts license/permit application and approval processes. Currently, to operate in a vending zone requires an individual street food vendor to reach out to at least three different agencies to procure appropriate licenses and permits. Establishing an inter-agency task force focused on street vending licensing would enable the District to create a more microbusiness-friendly environment. This includes:

- Creating regular and transparent lines of communication and coordination across DLCP, DDOT, DOH, DSLBD, OP, MOCA, MOLA and vending zone managers
- Developing integrated permit/license approval systems
- Streamlining rules and regulations
- Creating multilingual, cross-agency permit manuals
- Providing wraparound support services, including legal, financial literacy, small business support, and financial aid, with the support of existing providers such as the Latino Economic Development Center

Notable Case Study:

LA County adopted its first official Sidewalk Vending Ordinance and reassigned the Sidewalk Vending Program to the Department of Economic Opportunity, signalling the County’s strong commitment to a care-first approach. Rather than ramping up permit enforcement, DEO is wrapping around a suite of micro business services designed and managed in partnership with technical assistance providers, Inclusive Action - one of the founding coalition partners in the LA Street Vendor Campaign. To date, the Program has run major communications and marketing campaigns that serve to educate and raise awareness to vendors about available resources and permitting processes to prioritize compliance. For the first time, DEO is also providing a single point of contact for vending and the Department will serve as coordinator with other County agencies and local municipalities.

What You Will Need:

- ✓ Sidewalk Vending Permit application.
- ✓ Permit application fee (\$0 first year)
- ✓ Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) issued by the IRS
- ✓ Required documents:
 - Seller's permit from California Department of Tax and Fee Administration
 - Health permit from DPH
 - Business License from TTC that is industry specific
 - DBA/Fictitious Business Name from the RCCC and/or SOS
- ✓ Government-issued Identification
- ✓ Food cart approved by DPH

New Law for Street Food Vendors! SB 972 What Does It Mean?

1. Sidewalk food vendors are now Compact Mobile Food Operations (CMFOs). CMFOs are a type of food business that allows you to prepare certain foods at home. They must be packaged at a store or an approved facility. CMFOs are not subject to criminal penalties. Vendors may still receive fines for not complying with health and safety.

2. Some CMFOs don't need a health permit. If they are only selling pre-packaged food or whole fruits and veggies that are non-perishable and are selling in a space smaller than 25 sq. ft.

3. Some vendors can now prep certain foods at their cart when approved by the health department.

4. Some vendors can now prep food and store up to two carts at home.

5. You'll need a California Food Handler's Card or CFHC.

DO'S and DON'TS

DO's of Sidewalk Vending

- Roaming Sidewalk Vendors are permitted to vend in residential and non residential areas and must move continuously, except when conducting a sale, which must last no more than fifteen (15) minutes. In no event may a Roaming Sidewalk Vendor conduct their activity in a residential area in such a manner to constitute operating in a fixed location.
- Any vendor operating within the allowed hours must respect the communities in which they operate and avoid loud, and unreasonable noises as specified in the California Penal code.
- In residential areas, roaming sidewalk vendors may operate between 9:00 am. and 9:00 pm.
- In nonresidential areas, a roaming or stationary vendor may operate between the hours of 6:00 am. and 12:00 am., or the hours of operation imposed on other businesses on the same street or block, whichever is least restrictive.
- Sidewalk Vendors of Food must adhere to County Public Health Department permit requirements pursuant to Title 11 of the County Code and applicable requirements of the California Health and Safety Code.

DON'TS of Sidewalk Vending

- Sidewalk Vendors must not connect to any public utilities, including any source for water or power.
- Sidewalk Vendors must not obstruct or hinder pedestrian or vehicle flow, or place any equipment, food, or merchandise on the Sidewalk or Pedestrian Path which may hinder pedestrian safety or vehicle visibility.
- Sidewalk Vendors are prohibited in areas with no Sidewalk or Pedestrian Path when a Sidewalk or Pedestrian Path is less than six (6) feet wide, since such activity would unreasonably interfere with the safe flow of pedestrians and vehicles.
- Stationary Sidewalk Vendors are prohibited in areas that are zoned exclusively residential.
- Prohibited Items: selling counterfeit products, animals, insects, controlled substances, medicine, chemicals, lottery tickets, firearms, ammunition, alcohol, fireworks, cannabis or cannabis products, industrial hemp products, tobacco, tobacco-related products, adult materials, or any other items that are illegal, or unsafe for Vending.

Understand the Rules

To help sidewalk vendors navigate legal requirements and operate safely within the county, see snapshot of key information below. For a complete understanding of all regulations, please read the [Sidewalk Vending Ordinance](#) and [SB 972](#).

Two Types of Sidewalk Vendors

Sidewalk Vendors are part of LA County’s “open-air economy” and are individuals who sell food or merchandise from a pedestrian path or sidewalk. There are two types of sidewalk vendors in LA County: Stationary Vendor or Roaming Vendor

Roaming Sidewalk Vendor is a sidewalk vendor who moves from place to place on a sidewalk or pedestrian path and stops only to complete a customer transaction for no longer than a 15-minute period.

Stationary Sidewalk Vendor is a sidewalk vendor who vends from a fixed location.

What You Can Sell

Before starting your sidewalk vending business, view the list of approved items, either retail or food, you can sell.

Retail sales include clothing, household items, gifts, flowers, cards, handmade items, and more.

Food allowable without a Health Permit are items such as whole fruits, vegetables and prepackaged from a store (chips, sodas, snacks) under 25 square feet or (5 feet by 5 feet space)

Sale of other types of food may require one or more types of Health Permits issues through the [LA County Department of Public Health](#).

Sidewalk VENDING LA COUNTY

department of economic opportunity
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INDOOR STORAGE/VENDING LOCATION

Support identification and leasing of near-term indoor storage facility

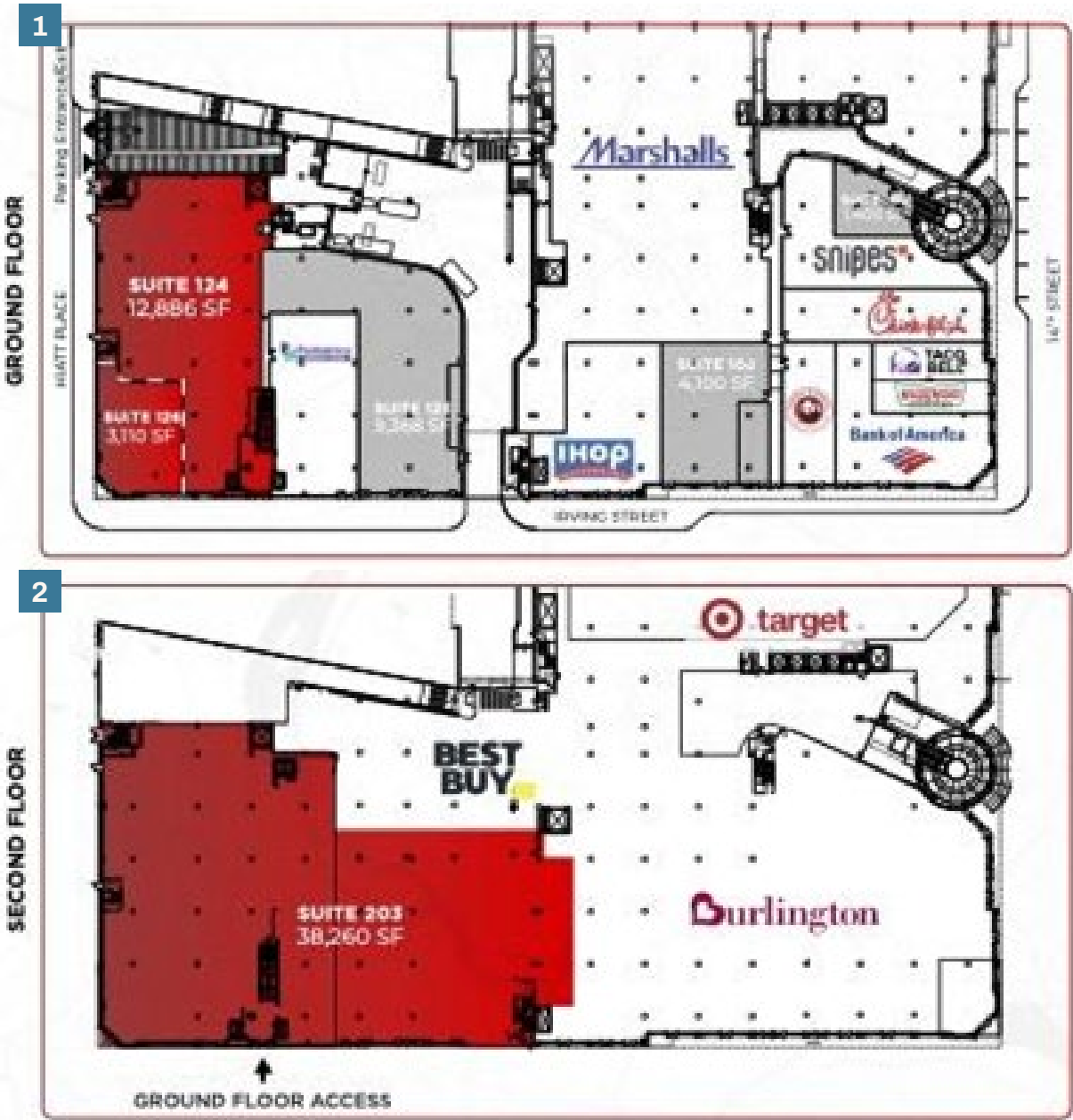
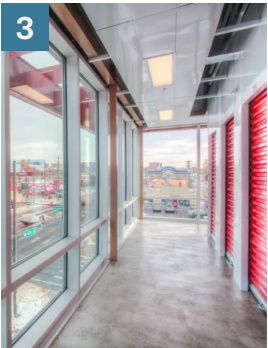
Given the limited financial resources available to existing vendors in Columbia Heights, many have instead expressed the near-term need to acquire a community-owned and/or managed storage hub that may be sub-leased at subsidized rates to house fresh produce, products, and street furniture overnight. Such a facility may not only reduce the burden on vendors to transport equipment daily but also potentially discourage vendors from affixing property to street trees/tree guards and other public amenities in the neighborhood.

Viable indoor storage sites should meet the following criteria:

- Site must be located within 1,000 feet or 0.25 mile of vending sites located on 14th Street and Irving Street
- Minimum square footage: 3,000 SF
 - This will allow at least 20-25 x 80-100SF dedicated, secure storage rooms to be partitioned for eligible vendors
- Site must be located on property with convenient off-street load-in with 24/7 access

- Site should be equipped with a commercial security system, including access control, security cameras, and door hardware
- Site must be designed and equipped with cold and dry storage facilities
- (Optional) Dedicated bathroom facility

At this time, there are a number of vacant commercial spaces located on the ground floor, or have freight elevator access, in the neighborhood that meet the criteria outlined above, including at DCUSA.



Captions:
1-2. Available commercial space at DCUSA that meets eligibility criteria outlined.
3-4. Depending on available space, storefront design should include a) partitioned, secure storage spaces measuring 80-100SF, b) product packaging area, c) community lounge. Source: The Architect's Newspaper.

INDOOR STORAGE/VENDING LOCATION

Explore viable sites in the neighborhood for near-term and long-term indoor storage and vending

Based on feedback provided by current vendors in the neighborhood, the concept of an indoor market hall/vending location will be a long-term one. Vendors shared their limited ability to afford commercial rents that are likely to be passed down at an indoor location.

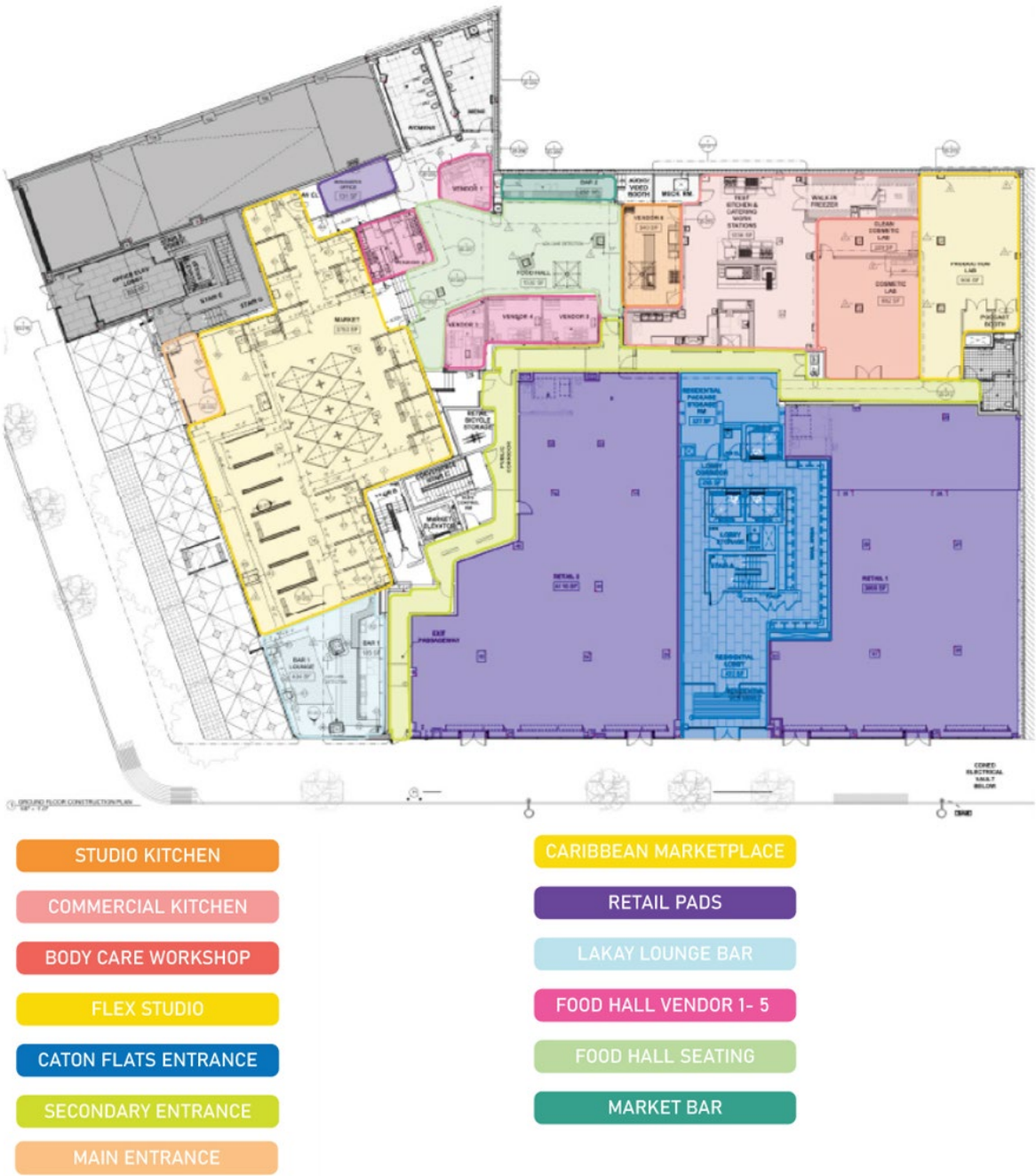
Viable sites will meet the following criteria and prioritize convenience, accessibility, and visibility for vendors.

- Site must be located within 1,000 feet or 0.25 mile of vending zone to ensure accessibility to outdoor vending zone locations
- Site must be visible from bus stops or metro exits to maximize visibility to daily foot traffic in the neighborhood
- Site must be equipped with convenient off-street load-in with 24/7 access
- Site must be designed and equipped with commercial kitchen facilities for prepared food vendors and local entrepreneurs to access
- Site must be designed and equipped with cold and dry storage facilities

The indoor market/vending location should be multi-functional with the following functions as its priorities:

- Dedicated storage spaces for vendors to securely keep produce, food products, merchandise, and stall furniture
- Permitted food preparation spaces
- Community gathering space or cooling center
- Classroom and training spaces for microbusiness technical support, such as merchandising and food preparation certifications
- Seasonal indoor vending to accommodate extreme weather conditions
- Year-round indoor vending spaces

Ultimately, successful market halls must serve as year-round destinations for cultural experiences and must be carefully tenanted with a wide mix of produce, prepared foods, and merchandise goods that respond to local market preferences, and supported by pedestrian-friendly spaces such as plazas that enable large-scale cultural events and celebrations. The design of the facility and financing structures should also be methodically developed based on extensive retail market research and stakeholder engagement with original vendors prior to construction to ensure long-term viability.



Sample Floor Plan:
Flatbush Caton Market (New York, NY). The 20,000 SF market features 25 market vendors and 5 turn-key food vendor spaces for short term pop-ups and/or long term residencies ranging in size from 140-200 SF.

